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THE

WORKS

OF THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

WITH

THE LIFE

OF

LORD BOLINGBROKE

BY DR. GOLDSMITH,

NOW ENLARGED BY MORE RECENT INFORMATION
RELATIVE TO HIS PUBLICK AND PERSONAL CHARACTER,
SELECTED FROM VARIOUS AUTHORITIES.

A NEW EDITION,

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

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ERRATA:

P. 30. l. 6. *dele* be.
73. l. 2. from the bottom, *dele* in.
84. l. 10. from the bottom, *for* with *read* within.
339. l. 4, *for* trium vir *read* triumvir.
370. l. 2. of Note, *put a full stop after* Sui.

A DISSERTATION UPON PARTIES.

First Published in the Craftsman Oct. 1733 to Dec. 1734. & then published ~~[illegible]~~ in a Volume with the dedication & any in 1735. — Swift, who seems not to have seen the separate articles, says, in a letter to Pope May 12, 1735, "I have lately read a book imputed to Ld. Bolingbroke called "A dissertation upon Parties," I think it very masterly written". Swift's Works, XVIII. 354.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir ROBERT WALPOLE,
Knight of the most noble Order of the Garter,
Chancellor and Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer,
First Commissioner of the Treasury,
And one of
His Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, &c.

SIR,

AS soon as the demand of the public made it necessary to collect the following papers together, and to prepare a second edition of them, I took the resolution of addressing them to you. The style of my dedication will be very different from that, which is commonly employed to persons in your station. But if you find nothing agreeable in the style, you may find perhaps something useful, something that will deserve your serious reflection, in the matter of it. I shall compare you neither to BURLEIGH, nor GODOLPHIN. Let me not prophane the tombs of the dead, to raise altars to the living. I shall make you no compliments on the wisdom of your administration, nor on the wonders you have performed, to the honour and advantage of this kingdom, in the course of fourteen, or fifteen years, either at home, or abroad. I shall leave these copious themes to others, and shall confine myself to reasons of another kind, that induced me to this dedication. If these reasons prove sufficient

cient to convince the publick of the extreme propriety of it, I have all that I propose to myself. Give me leave to present to you, in one short view, the general design of these little essays.

They are designed then to expose the artifice, and to point out the series of misfortunes, by which we were divided formerly into parties, whose contests brought even the fundamental principles of our constitution into question, and whose excesses brought liberty to the very brink of ruin.

They are designed to give true ideas of this constitution, and to revive in the minds of men the true spirit of it.

They are designed to assert and vindicate the justice and honour of the revolution; of the principles established, of the means employed, and of the ends obtained by it.

They are designed to explode our former distinctions, and to unite men of all denominations in the support of these principles, in the defence of these means, and in the pursuit of these ends.

They are designed to show how far these ends were answered at the revolution, or have been answered since; and by consequence how much, or how little is wanting, to render that glorious work complete, according to the original plan, and agreeably to the engagements taken, at that time, with the nation.

Let me now appeal to you, sir—Are these designs, which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow? You cannot think it.

You

You will not say it. That never can be the case, until we cease to think like freemen, as well as to be free. Are these designs in favour of the Pretender? I appeal to the whole world; and I scorn, with a just indignation, to give any other answer to so shameless, and so senseless an objection. No; they are designs in favour of the constitution; designs, to secure, to fortify, to perpetuate that excellent system of government. I court no other cause, I claim no other merit.

Stet fortuna domûs, et avi numerentur avorum.

Let the illustrious and royal house, that hath been called to the government of these kingdoms, govern them till time shall be no more. But let the spirit, as well as the letter of the constitution, they are intrusted to preserve, be, as it ought to be, and as we promise ourselves it will be, the sole rule of their government, and the sole support of their power: and whatever happens in the various course of human contingencies, whatever be the fate of particular persons, of houses, or families, let the liberties of Great Britain be immortal.

They will be so, if that constitution, whose genuine effects they are, be maintained in purity and vigour. A perpetual attention to this great point is therefore the interest and duty of every man in Britain; and there is scarce any man, who may not contribute to the advancement of it, in some degree. The old may inform the young, and the young may animate the old. Even they, who are most retired from the scene of business, may be useful in this cause, to those, who are in it; to those who

are heated by the action, distracted by the cares, or dissipated by the pleasures of the world. I say they may be useful: and I add, that they ought to be so to the utmost that their situation allows. Government is the business of those who are appointed to govern, and of those who are appointed to control them. But the British constitution is the business of every Briton. It is so more particularly, indeed, of persons raised, like you, to the highest posts in the government. You lie under particular obligations of this kind, beside the general engagements of interest and duty, that are common to all: and a neglect in others would be a breach of trust in you. We say that our kings can do no wrong. The maxim is wisely established, and ought to be followed, no doubt, as far as the conduct of princes renders the observance of it practicable. But from the establishment of this maxim results the necessity of another, without which the exercise of the executive power would remain under no control. Though our kings can do no wrong, and though they cannot be called to account by any form our constitution prescribes; their ministers may. They are answerable for the administration of the government; each for his particular part, and the prime, or sole minister, when there happens to be one, for the whole. He is so the more, and the more justly, if he hath affected to render himself so, by usurping on his fellows; by wrigling, intriguing, whispering, and bargaining himself into this dangerous post, to which he was not called by the general suffrage, nor perhaps by the deliberate choice of his master

himself. It follows then, that ministers are answerable for every thing done to the prejudice of the constitution, in the same proportion as the preservation of the constitution in it's purity and vigour, or the perverting and weakening it, are of greater consequence to the nation than any other instances of good or bad government.

Believe me, sir, a reverence for the constitution, and a conscientious regard to the preservation of it, are in the political, like charity in the religious system, a cloak to hide a multitude of sins: and as the performance of all other religious duties will not avail in the sight of God, without charity, so neither will the discharge of all other ministerial duties avail in the sight of men, without a faithful discharge of this principal duty. Should a minister govern in various instances of domestic and foreign management, ignorantly, weakly, or even wickedly; and yet pay this reverence, and bear this regard to the constitution, he would deserve certainly much better quarter, and would meet with it too from every man of sense and honour, than a minister, who should conduct the administration with great ability and success, and should at the same time procure and abet, or even connive at such indirect violations of the rules of the constitution as tend to the destruction of it, or even at such evasions as tend to render it useless. A minister, who had the ill qualities of both these, and the good ones of neither; who made his administration hateful in some respects, and despicable in others: who sought that security by

ruining the constitution, which he had forfeited by dishonouring the government; who encouraged the profligate, and seduced the unwary, to concur with him in this design, by affecting to explode all publick spirit, and to ridicule every form of our constitution; such a minister would be looked upon most justly as the shame and scourge of his country; sooner or later he would fall without pity; and it is hard to say what punishment would be proportionable to his crimes.——To conclude this head therefore; since the obligations of interest and duty on every man, especially on every minister, and more especially still on a prime or sole minister, to reverence the constitution, to conform his conduct to it, and neither to invade, nor suffer it to be invaded by others, are so undeniable, and so strong; and since the means, which the minister's power gives him to preserve it in purity and vigour, or to corrupt and weaken it, are so many; nothing could be more proper than a dedication to one, in your exalted station, of papers, that are written to explain this interest, and to enforce this duty, and to press them on the understanding and conscience of every man in Britain; but of him most, who is most concerned.

After the general reasons, that have been given, and suggested, for addressing this dedication to you, give me leave to descend into some, that are a little more particular, and that regard the man, as well as the minister.

If the principles of the revolution, and the means employed in it, have not been vindicated by

by me, with as great force of reason and eloquence, as they were by you, in a famous oration you made at SACHEVEREL's trial, they have been vindicated however to the best of my power. The cause is the same, though the performances are not equal: and since the cause is the same, the cause will recommend my writings to your good opinion, how little soever you may like the advocate. But I have something more to urge in my own favour. You had a sermon to condemn, and a parson to roast; for that, I think, was the decent language of the time: and, to carry on the allegory, you roasted him at so fierce a fire, that you burnt yourselves. Your arguments being confined to the propositions this preacher had advanced, you may seem rather to have justified resistance, or the means employed to bring about the revolution, than the revolution: for though the principles of the revolution were, and must for ever remain true, and though the means were just, and will for ever be so, in cases of the like nature; yet true principles, and just means require to be farther sanctified by their ends. The man, who should affect the greatest zeal for the principles then established, and the means then used, would deserve, I think, to be ranked among the false brethren; and would prove himself a treacherous, and a mercenary friend to the revolution, if he showed any indifference about the ends obtained, or endeavoured in any manner to defeat those, that were intended to be obtained by it. The people, who run so great a risk, and bring about so great an event, in order to restore their constitution, and secure

secure their liberties against dangers of every kind, and especially againſt those which recent experience hath taught them to apprehend, have surely a good right to the whole benefit of such a revolution; and they cannot be deprived of any part of this benefit, or left exposed to any shadow of the same dangers, by any rule of justice, or good policy.

Such considerations as these made me think, that, to assert and vindicate fully the honour and justice of the revolution, it was necessary that the ends of the revolution should be insisted upon in my arguments, whether they were so or not in yours; and that the importance of the subject, as well as the difference of the occasions, for the whole lay open before me, would be a sufficient reason for supplying in the copy what was wanting in the original. I have endeavoured therefore to show how much our constitution hath been improved, how far our liberties have been better secured by the revolution, and how little is wanting to complete that glorious design, and to render the British constitution the most perfect system of a free government, that was ever established in the world. If all the ends of the revolution are already obtained, it is not only impertinent to argue for obtaining any of them, but factious designs might be imputed, and the name of incendiary be applied, with some colour, perhaps, to any one, who should persist in pressing this point. On the other hand, if any of these ends have not been fully obtained, the reproach of faction and the title of incendiary will belong to every person, who raises a contest by his opposition

opposition to these instances, and who endeavours to make the friends of the constitution pass for enemies to the government. Thus it is easy to join issue: and when issue is once joined, it cannot be difficult to decide. If a principal end of the revolution was to secure the nation for the future against all the dangers, to which liberty, as well as religion, had been exposed before the revolution; if one of these dangers arose from the corruption, that had been employed to create a dependency of the two houses of parliament on the crown; if this corruption might have succeeded very probably then, had the means been sufficient to support it; if no provision was made, at the revolution, to secure the independency of the two houses, and the freedom of elections, against corruption; if no provision hath been made against this danger, since the revolution, proportionable to that increase of the possible means of corruption, which hath happened since the revolution, by the increase of the revenue of the crown, of debts, of taxes, of officers, and powers to raise these taxes; if all this be so, and the whole merits of the cause may be safely rested there, how can it be pretended, that all the ends of the revolution have been already obtained? They have not most certainly. When, and in what manner, they shall be obtained, it would be presumption in any private persons so much as to insinuate. They may represent such things as they judge to be of use to the publick, and may support their representations by all the reasons, that have determined their opinions. Thus far their province

province extends. All beyond this belongs to their superiors; and in the case before us, to the wisdom of the nation assembled in parliament. This however I would add; that as a consistency of character seems to exact from you a zeal for obtaining all the ends of the revolution, suitable to that which you have expressed for the principles it established, and the means it employed; so the particular obligations you lie under, to promote the honour and interest of his present majesty and of his royal family, seem to exact the same: for, after all, the revolution is the foundation of the present settlement; whatever strengthens the foundation, strengthens the superstructure; and there can be no need of going about to prove, that to obtain all the ends of the revolution is to strengthen that foundation. The arguments, that prevailed formerly with many against the principles and means of the revolution, are quite exploded; the prejudices against them are quite worn out. We may therefore persuade, without flattering ourselves, that the foundation of our present settlement, and of all our future national happiness, is laid immovably in these two respects. Shall it not be so, and does it not become you, in a particular manner, to endeavour that it should be so, in every respect? Could you forgive yourself, if you neglected the first opportunity of concurring to remove the least pretence from the disaffected, nay from the well-affected, to say that the ends of particular men, of parties, and of families, have been answered by the revolution, even beyond

their

their several expectations; but that the national expectations have not been so fully answered, nor the ends of the revolution entirely obtained? No man knows better than you the truth and force of what hath been here advanced. No man therefore is able to make a juster application of it to the most important interests of your country, to the true interest of your royal master, and to your private interest too; if that will add, as I presume it will, some weight to the scale; and if that requires, as I presume it does, a regard to futurity, as well as to the present moment. Upon the whole matter therefore, I cannot but expect that you should receive favourably an address, made so properly, and in which, if I have pressed you a little warmly, yet I have done it with the decency that every gentleman owes to another, at least to himself. You will allow me, and every friend of the revolution and of liberty, leave to hope that the time is coming, when you will not oppose, or shall not have it in your power to oppose, the endeavours of those, who promote the entire completion of all the ends proposed by the first, and the full security of the last. Whenever this happens; whenever the independency of the two houses of parliament, and the uninfluenced and uninfluenceable freedom of elections are once effectually secured against the dangers that may possibly arise hereafter from the growth of corruption; then will all our future kings be reduced to the agreeable necessity of establishing their thrones, as we are obliged to acknowledge that the throne

prince who pursues this method risks the power he hath for a power he does not want. He would be the more inexcusable, under such a constitution as ours; because, if he could not gain esteem by his great, he might gain affection by his good qualities: and this principle would carry him, even better perhaps than the other, to the power he would obtain. What can a prince desire more than to be placed at the head of a united people; among whom he may have as many friends as he pleases, and can have no enemies, unless he creates them, by supposing them to be such, and by treating them accordingly? If the designs of a prince, in fomenting the divisions, are to invade the liberties of his people, his designs are laid in the utmost iniquity: and if these are not his designs, they must be laid in the utmost folly. When a people submits quietly to government, and is willing to obey on the terms on which alone their prince hath a right to command, how extravagant must his demands be, and how unaccountable his conduct, to divide such a people? Shall he expect, for instance, that all his people should think like him and his council, about every occurrence, about every measure he takes, and every man he employs? and since this is too much to ask of freemen, nay of slaves, if his expectation be not answered, shall he form a lasting division upon such transient motives? Shall he proscribe every man, as an enemy to his government, who dislikes the administration of it? Proscriptions are abominable, and inhuman, when they

they are backed by a fulness of arbitrary power. But to hang up the tables of proscription, without the power of sending centurions to cut off every head that wears a face disliked at court, would be madness in a prince. Such a conduct cannot suit his interest, however it may his passions, in any circumstance whatever. There are indeed circumstances, wherein it may suit the interest of a minister. Till the sword of civil war be drawn, a prince can scarce become irreconcilable with his people, and be reduced for want of national strength, to support his power and dignity by the force of faction. But a minister may fall easily and soon into this desperate state: and after fomenting, as long as he could, the divisions of parties, he may have no refuge but in faction. There may be such a conduct, as no national party will bear, or at least will justify. But faction hath no regard to national interests. Faction therefore will bear any thing, share in any thing, justify any thing. If the minister, who takes this method to support himself, hath any art, he will endeavour to disguise his faction under the name and appearance of a national party. But even this disguise will soon fall off. The best of those, who were engaged in the party, will quit the faction, and then the latter must stand confessed to public view. But it is not only the criminal conduct of a minister, and the fear of resting his administration on the national judgment, that may oblige him to govern by division, and by faction. As the most opposite notions are often united in the head, so are the most contrary sentiments in the heart

of man. Incapacity often begets sufficiency; and yet a consciousness of incapacity often begets a jealousy of power, grounded on a sense of the superior merit of other men. The minister, who grows less by his elevation, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, will always have this jealousy strong about him. He must of course select a faction to himself; and this faction must be composed, to answer his purposes, of men servilely obsequious, or extremely inferior to him by their talents. Whenever this happens, the reign of venality, of prostitution, of ignorance, of futility, and of dulness commences. The minister will dread to see the persons employed whom he secretly esteems, for this very reason, because he esteems them. Abilities to serve the commonwealth will be an objection sufficient to outweigh the strongest proofs of attachment to the person of the prince, and of zeal for his government; nay, even the merit of a whole life spent in giving these proofs. In short, the very reasons that should determine the prince to employ men, will determine the minister to proscribe them. Dislike, or contempt of him, will pass with his master for disaffection to the government; and, under this pompous name of government, will nothing but the paltry interest, or humour, of the minister be couched. The minister will reap, perhaps, for even that may be doubtful, the immediate benefit of dividing, or maintaining the divisions of the nation, and of nursing up faction, by continuing longer in power, his sole security; and, by deferring, if not escaping, the evil day, the

day of account and retribution. But the prince will reap, in this case, the permanent mischief of establishing division and faction; and may possibly make the lamentable exchange of his own popularity, for his minister's impunity. I need not finish up this picture of imagination, since I write to you, who know so much better than I pretend to do the characters of men, and the arts of government. It is sufficient, that I have hinted at the general causes and effects of the endeavours, that are sometimes used, and to which Great Britain hath not been a stranger, to foment national divisions, and to govern by the faction of a minister, armed with the power of the prince, against the sense and spirit of a nation, and the interest of the prince himself. This may serve; and it is all I shall say, to bespeak your approbation of the papers that follow, on account of the matter they contain.

But, sir, the reasons I have given, how pertinent soever they may be, are not the only reasons I had for addressing myself, in this manner, and upon this occasion, to you. There are reasons of another kind; reasons that come still more home to yourself; reasons, that appear very important to me, and that will appear so to you, perhaps, when you have reflected duly on them, and have weighed impartially the consequences of them. I shall press these reasons with all the plainness and force that decency permits, in so publick and personal an application; because, though truth may sometimes offend, I am very indifferent to offences taken with truth on my side. If you hearken

to truth, which men in your station seldom hear, you may be the better for it. If you do not, the author of this dedication cannot be the worse: for I will add, upon this occasion, that whoever he is, he is one you cannot impose upon, in your private capacity, neither as a man, nor as a gentleman; and that you can as little do it, in your publick capacity. You cannot disappoint him; because the temper of his mind gives you no hold on him. He hath neither avarice to make him desire riches, nor ambition to make him desire power, nor vanity to make him desire honours. You cannot oppress him; because he is free from guilt, and from every probable, for no man is free from every possible, imputation of guilt. The laws of his country are his protection, and they are sufficient to protect every Briton, who reverences and obeys them, in how peculiar a situation soever he may be found. They, who act against these laws, and they alone, may have reason to fear, let their situation be never so high, or their present power never so great.

Having said this, I proceed to observe to you, that you are in the right most certainly to retort by yourself, or others, in the best and smartest manner that you, or they can, whatever the writings published in the Craftsman* may contain, which you judge to be injurious to yourself, or reflecting on your administration. The publick will judge uprightly upon the whole matter. The laughers will be for those who have most wit, and the serious

* A political paper published weekly at that time, under the assumed name of Caleb D'Anvers.

part

part of mankind for those who have most reason on their side.

Again. As to affairs of peace, or war, publick occurrences, domestic management, foreign negotiations, in short, the news of the day, and the current business of the time, weekly and daily papers, or more elaborate, anniversary treatises, are properly employed by you to explain, in your own favour, the series of your conduct; to refute Caleb; or, which is still more easy, and by some thought as useful, to keep up the cavil on one point, till a new one is started, that draws off the attention of the world. All this may be called fair war; and whoever prevails in the judgment of the publick, the publick will reap information from the contest, and will have reason to be pleased with these appeals, which present an image of the custom that obtained in the ancient commonwealths of Greece and Rome, where the greatest interests of the state were debated, and the greatest men in those governments were accused and defended, in publick harangues, and before the whole people.

But the writings of the Craftsman have not been confined to these subjects that are personal or temporary. The cause of the British constitution hath been pleaded through the whole course of these papers; every danger to it hath been pointed out; every security, or improvement of it, hath been explained and pressed.——Now here, sir, begins my complaint. I said that the cause of our constitution hath been pleaded in the Craftsman; and I am sorry that the expression is

so precisely just, that no other would come up to the case. The cause of the constitution hath been pleaded; for the constitution hath been attacked; openly, insolently attacked, and is so every day by those, against whom the Craftsman so often employs his pen. Who could have expected, for I will give an instance or two, who could have expected, at this time, and under the present establishment, to hear the necessity of maintaining standing armies, in times of peace, even against the people of Britain who maintain them, contended for and asserted?——Who could have expected to hear a dependency, a corrupt dependency, of the parliament on the crown, contended for and asserted to be a necessary expedient to supply a want of power, which is falsely supposed in the crown; as if our fathers had opposed, and at length destroyed that chimera, called prerogative, formerly so dangerous to our liberties, for no other reason but to furnish arguments for letting loose upon us another monster, more dangerous to our liberties by far?——Who could have expected, that attempts to revive the doctrines of old whiggism, and the principles and spirit of the revolution, in opposition to such manifest contradictions of them all, would give any umbrage, or cause any alarm among men, who still affect to call themselves whigs, and pretend zeal for a government, that is founded on the revolution, and could not have been established without it?——This could not have been expected, I think; and yet so it is. There are persons, who take to themselves the title of ministerial writers, and have sometimes the front to assume that of writers

for

for the government. These persons are not content to ring, in daily panegyric, encomiums on the wisdom and virtue, the justice and clemency, the success and triumphs of your administration; and to answer, or to attempt to answer, the almost innumerable objections, that have been made, it matters not here whether justly or unjustly, to your conduct at home, and your own, and that of your brother abroad: but they take fire, they show an alarm, and they grow angry, whenever any thing is written, nay when a word is dropped, in favour of the fundamental articles of British liberty. Sometimes they argue directly, and in plain terms, against them. Sometimes they perplex and puzzle the cause; evade what they cannot deny; and, when they cannot impose a fallacy, endeavour at least to hinder men from discerning a truth. Thus, sir, they mingle your justification with the condemnation of our constitution; and labour, as much as in them lies, to make your preservation and the destruction of this constitution a common cause. If you could possibly doubt the truth of what is here advanced, I might refer you to the particular pamphlets and papers, which are known at least by the answers, that have been given to them, till such time as an extract of all the passages, hinted at here, be made publick, as I hope it will; and whenever it is, I dare appeal beforehand to your private thoughts, whether the principles they contain, and the consequences deducible from them, would not destroy, if they were to take place, the whole scheme of the British constitution. It hath been asked,

why do the writers on one side eternally harp on liberty, and the constitution? Do they mean to instil jealousy and distrust, and to alienate the minds of the people? In what instances have the laws been broken, or hath the constitution been invaded, by those who govern? These questions deserve an answer; and I shall answer the first, by asking another question. Why do the writers on one side eternally labour to explain away liberty, and to distinguish us out of our constitution? If nothing had been said of this kind, I am persuaded that much less would have been said of the other; and I can assure you, with great truth, that the publick had not been troubled, particularly, with this dissertation upon parties. As to the other two questions, they may be taken together. There is a plain and real difference between jealousy and distrust, that may be observed in the present case. Men may be jealous, on account of their liberties, and I think they ought to be so, even when they have no immediate distrust, that the persons who govern design to invade them. An opportunity of invading them opened, is reason sufficient for awakening the jealousy; and if the persons, who have this jealousy, apply to those who govern, to help to cure it, by removing the opportunity, the latter may take this, if they please, as a mark of confidence, not distrust: at least it will be in their power, and surely it will be for their interest, to show that they deserve confidence in this case, not distrust. But it will be always trifling, and foolish, to ask what laws have been broken, what invasions on the constitution have

have been made; because as nothing of this sort will be done, when there are no designs dangerous to the constitution carried on; so when there are such designs, whatever is done of this sort will be private, indirect, and so covered, that the greatest moral certainty may be destitute of proof.

Whenever any of these things are done publickly, directly, and in a manner to be easily proved, the danger will be over, the constitution will be destroyed, and all fear for it and concern about it will be impertinent, because they will come too late. If ever that old trite maxim, "principiis obsta," was well applied, it is so in the case we speak of here.

The reasons I have given for mentioning these writers ought to excuse me for it; at least, to you; and even to you I shall say very little more about them. The flowers they gather at Billingsgate, to adorn and enliven their productions, shall be passed over by me, without any reflection. They assume the privilege of watermen and oyster-women. Let them enjoy it in that good company, and exclusively of all other persons. They cause no scandal; they give no offence; they raise no sentiment but contempt in the breasts of those they attack; and it is to be hoped, for the honour of those whom they would be thought to defend, that they raise, by this low and dirty practice, no other sentiment in them. But there is another part of their proceeding, which may be attributed by malicious people to you, and which deserves for that reason alone some place in this dedication, as it might be some motive to the writing of it.

When

When such authors grow scurrilous, it would be highly unjust to impute their scurrility to any prompter; because they have in themselves all that is necessary to constitute a scold; ill manners, impudence, a foul mouth, and a fouler heart. But when they menace, they rise a note higher. They cannot do this in their own names. Men may be apt to conclude therefore, that they do it in the name, as they affect to do it on the behalf, of the person, in whose cause they desire to be thought retained. Many examples of these menaces might be quoted, and most of them would be found directed against one particular person. After employing the whole impotence of their rhetoric against him, and venting for many years together, almost without notice on his part, as much calumny as their imaginations could furnish, a pamphlet hath been lately published, the professed design of which is to call for a vigorous proceeding in parliament against this man. To introduce this proposal, it is preceded by a long series of facts; some notoriously false; some, which it is impossible should be true; others, which it is impossible this writer should know to be true, if they were so; and others again, not only destitute of proof, but even of probability. Such accusations must be brought by some * creature, of so notoriously prostituted a conscience, that his evidence would be rejected in any common cause, and should not be refuted therefore by me, if I was concerned to refute him. But, sir, if I take notice of this libel, or refer to others of the same kind, it

* See the Grand Accuser, &c. p. 77.

is

is not done out of regard to these authors, whom I despise, as I am persuaded the person does, against whom all the virulence of their malice is directed. My concern, upon this occasion, is for you alone, and you will allow me to represent what that concern dictates. It is possible that you may have very strong resentments against this person, and he against you. It is possible that you may have shown yours, and he may have shown his, according to the different circumstances you have been in, and the different opportunities you have had. But this will not become a matter of state, though you are minister of state. The publick will espouse your passions no more than his; nor concern itself to inquire who gave the first occasion to these resentments; who hath acted the part of a fair, and who of a treacherous enemy. It is, I doubt, too certain, that the publick hath been employed sometimes to revenge private quarrels, and to serve the low turns of envy, or jealousy. But, in all these cases, the publick hath been imposed upon; these motives have been concealed; others have been pretended; and the others have been of a publick nature alone; because the bare suspicion of any private interest, or passion, in a publick prosecution is sufficient, and most justly so, to create invincible prejudices to it. The scribblers I speak of have laid you therefore under great disadvantages, notwithstanding your elevation, and your power, whether you design any thing against the person so obnoxious to you, or not. They should have concealed industriously, what they have affected to proclaim; since

since it is certain, that, how great soever your popularity in the nation may be, they will never bring up mankind to think, that any person should be prosecuted by methods extraordinary, or even ordinary, purely for your ease, your pleasure, or your safety. If they could prove, what they frequently throw out, that every man is a friend to the pretender, who is not a friend to you; and that he, who objects to your conduct in the administration, endeavours to pull down the present government, and set up another: then, indeed, they might raise a spirit against this particular person, for aught I know; but most certainly against many others, of much greater consequence, who appear every day, in the face of the world, not to be your friends, and who make no scruple of objecting, with the utmost freedom, to your conduct. But such assertions as these will only serve to make men angry, or laugh. They, who have the best opinion of your abilities, will no more agree, that the present establishment is supported, than that it was made, by you. They will never be wanting in their respect to the crown so much, as to confound the cause of the king with the cause of his minister; or to suppose that the reins of government would grow weaker in his majesty's hand, if you was out of power, or out of the world.— In short, sir, you may pass, and I believe you do pass justly, for a man of extreme good parts, and for a minister of much experience; but you would not desire, I think, to be represented as the Atlas who supports this state; and your brother will not certainly pass for the Hercules who relieves you,

and

and who sustains, in his turn, the important burden.

I know very well, that something is added to supply, if that were possible, this defect, and to make the cause more plausible. It is pretended, that the writings imputed to this particular person, and several others published in the Craftsman, contain reflections of a very extravagant, indecent, and even seditious nature; such as they alone, who are capable of supposing them, are capable of making. But then these reflections are to be proved by the constructions, which the accusers make of the expressions employed by those, whom they accuse; constructions as arbitrary, and as forced, as many of those, by which some of the best men at Rome were brought within the interpretation of the law of majesty, by some of the worst. Examples of much the same sort have been set even in Britain, while the practice prevailed of supposing innuendoes, and parallels, and oblique meanings, and prosecuting and condemning men on suppositions, and interpretations. But there is no room to fear, that any such examples should be renewed, while a British spirit* prevails in a British parliament. While that spirit prevails, no parliament will condemn any man upon principles, which parliaments have always condemned as unjust and tyrannical. Less than any will they condemn those, who write in defence of this constitution at the request and on the instances of those

* See some Considerations concerning the Publick Funds, &c. p. 98.

who

who attack it. A British spirit and the spirit of the British constitution are one and the same; and therefore if ever there arises a British spirit * in a British parliament, of which I presume no doubt ought to be made at this time, vengeance will not overtake the former; it may be the latter.

What hath been said might suffice to show, how foolish and vain it is to throw out menaces against those who have nothing to fear, at a time when zeal to preserve the constitution in every part inviolate seems daily to increase. But since I have entered on the subject, and the matter seems of some concernment to you, give me leave to add one consideration more, that may serve to show how foolish and vain such a proceeding would be, even at any other time.——Let us suppose, that the very person pointed at was, and could be proved to be, the author of this Dissertation upon Parties, for instance, which I now dedicate to you. Let us suppose, that the resolution was taken to follow the generous and equitable advice of the pamphlet-writer, who thinks he ought to be proceeded against in a peculiar manner. Let us even suppose, that we lived in an age, when parliaments were brought, in some degree, under that very dependency, against which so much is said in this dissertation. In short, let us suppose, that the most innocent man, who was obnoxious to those in power, might have reasonable grounds to fear an exorbitant exercise of this power against him. But

* See some Considerations concerning the Publick Funds, &c. p. 98.

then

then let us make one single supposition on the other side. Let us suppose, that this obnoxious man was really in earnest; that he wrote from his heart; and that he felt there the same warmth for the British constitution, which he expressed in his writings, and laboured to infuse into the breast of every other man. I would ask you, sir, do you think such a man would be ashamed to avow, in the face of his country, the contents of the following sheets, or be afraid to suffer for them? Could any eloquence, even yours, if you would employ it so unworthily, expect, by the help of false surmises, and invidious comments, the base inventions of little railers, to make him pass for an enemy to the present establishment, who had proved himself a friend to that constitution, in consequence of which, and for the sake of which alone, this establishment was made? Would his endeavours to reconcile parties, and to abolish odious distinctions; would pleading for the attainment of all the ends proposed by, and promised at the revolution; for securing the independency of the two houses of parliament, and the freedom of elections, as effectually against corruption, as they are already secured against prerogative; would this, I say, make him pass for the greatest of criminals? No, sir, not in the breasts even of those who gave sentence against him, if men capable of giving such a sentence could be found. Among the rest of mankind his innocency would be acknowledged; his constancy would be applauded; his accusers, and his grand accuser in the first place,

place, would pass alone for criminal. He might fall a victim to power; but truth, and reason, and the cause of liberty would fall with him; and he who is buried in their ruins, is happier than he who survives them. Thus I am persuaded the person here intended would be found, upon trial, to think. The event therefore of such a prosecution, whatever it might be, could not turn to his disadvantage; and consequently to threaten him with it would be ridiculous, even at such a time as we have supposed, much more at the present. Void of all ambition, except the ambition of honest fame, he might stand the efforts of violence in such a cause, not only with little concern, but with much inward complacency. Weary of the world, determined and preparing to retire totally from it, he would surely suspend his retreat to face the persecution; and whatever his persecutors might imagine, they would erect a sort of triumphal arch to the man they hated. He would leave the world with more honour than they would remain in it. By suffering in defence of the constitution of his country, they who had thought favourably of him, would think that he crowned the good, and they who had entertained prejudices against him, that he atoned for the ill, which had been imputed to him. Such different judgments, you know, sir, will attend every man's character, who acts on our divided stage; and he is happy who can reconcile them so nearly. It never happens that there is a man of whom all speak well; as it rarely, very rarely, happens,

happens, that there is a man of whom all speak ill, except those who are hired to speak well.

I find it hard to leave off, when I have the honour of writing to you, sir; but having now explained the principal reasons, that induced me to address this dedication to you, it is time that I should force myself to a conclusion, and conclude by recommending the following sheets to your serious perusal. I recommend them to nothing else. I do not apprehend, that they will want your patronage any more than the person who wrote them. Let them stand or fall in the publick opinion, according to their merit. But if you should find any thing in them that deserves your notice, you will have an obligation to one, from whom you least expected any; to,

SIR,

Your most humble servant,

The AUTHOR of

The Dissertation upon Parties.

A DISSERTATION UPON PARTIES.

LETTER I.

SIR,

TO corrupt and to divide are the trite and wicked expedients, by which some ministers in all ages have affected to govern; but especially such as have been least capable of exerting the true arts of government. There is however a difference to be made between these two expedients, to the advantage of the latter, and by consequence between the characters of those who put them in practice.

Every busy, ambitious child of fortune, who hath himself a corrupt heart, and becomes master of a large purse, hath all that is necessary to employ the expedient of corruption with success.

A bribe, in the hand of the most blundering coxcomb that ever disgraced honour and wealth and power, will prevail as much as in the hand of a man of sense, and go farther too, if it weigh more. An intriguing chambermaid may slip a bank note into a griping paw, as well as the most subtle daemon of hell. H**e may govern as triumphantly by this expedient as the great knight his brother, and the great knight as Burleigh himself.

But every character cannot attempt the other expedient of dividing, or keeping up divisions, with equal success. There is, indeed, no occasion for any extraordinary genius to divide; and true wisdom despises the infamous task. But there is need of that left-handed wisdom, called cunning, and of those habits in business, called experience. He that is corrupted cooperates with him that corrupts. He runs into his arms at the first beckon; or, in order sometimes to raise the price, he meets him but half way. On the other hand, to divide, or to maintain and renew the divisions of parties in a state, a system of seduction and fraud is necessary to be carried on. The divided are so far from being accessory to the guilt, that they would not be divided, if they were not first deceived.

From these differences, which I have observed between the two expedients, and the characters and means proper to put them in practice with success, it may be discovered perhaps why, upon former occasions, as I shall hereafter show, the expedient of dividing prospered so much better than that of corrupting; and why, upon some later occasions, the expedient of corrupting succeeds so well in those hands, which, are not, and, I trust, will not be so lucky in maintaining or renewing our party divisions.

Much hath been written by you, Mr. D'Anvers, by your correspondents, and others who have drawn their pens in the cause of truth, virtue, and liberty, against the right reverend, as well as

undignified, the noble, as well as ignoble assertors of corruption; enough surely to shame those, who have not lost all sense of shame, out of so ignominious a crime; and to make those, who have not lost every other sense, tremble at the consequences of it. We may flatter ourselves, that these honest endeavours have had some effect; and have reason to hope, that far greater will follow from those illustrious examples of repulses, which have been lately given to the grand corrupter, notwithstanding his frequent and insolent declarations, that he could seduce whomsoever he had a mind to gain. These hopes are farther confirmed to us by repeated declarations of the sense of parliament, and will be turned, we doubt not, into certainty, whenever the wisdom of the two houses shall again think it proper to raise new barriers of law against this encroaching vice.

In the mean time, I think nothing can better answer the designs of your papers, nor promote the publick good more effectually in the present conjuncture, than to put our countrymen frequently on their guard against the artifice, which is clumsily, but industriously employed to maintain, and, if it be possible, to create new divisions among them. That day, which our fathers wished to see, and did not see, is now breaking upon us. Shall we suffer this light to be turned again into party-darkness by the incantations of those, who would not have passed for conjurers, even in the days of superstition and ignorance? The nation is not only brought into a uniformity

of opinion concerning the present administration by the length and the righteous conduct of it; but we are grown into a unanimity about principles of government, which the most sanguine could scarce have expected without extravagance. Certain associations of ideas were made so familiar to us, about half a century ago, and became in the course of time so habitual, that we should not have been able, even a few years ago, to break them; nor have been easily induced to believe, on the faith of any prediction, that experience and the evidence of facts would, in a few years more, break them for us, destroy all our notions of party, and substitute new ones in their room.

The power and majesty of the people, an original contract, the authority and independency of parliament, liberty, resistance, exclusion, abdication, deposition; these were ideas associated, at that time, to the idea of a whig, and supposed by every whig to be incommunicable and inconsistent with the idea of a tory.

Divine, hereditary, indefeasible right, lineal succession, passive obedience, prerogative, non-resistance, slavery, nay, and sometimes popery too, were associated in many minds to the idea of a tory; and deemed incommunicable and inconsistent, in the same manner, with the idea of a whig.

But now that which neither side would have believed on the faith of any prediction, is come to pass;

——— quod divûm promittere nemo
Auderet, volvenda dies, en! attulit ultro.

These

These associations are broken; these distinct sets of ideas are shuffled out of their order; new combinations force themselves upon us, and it would actually be as absurd to impute to the tories the principles, which were laid to their charge formerly, as it would be to ascribe to the projector and his faction the name of whigs, while they daily forfeit that character by their actions. The bulk of both parties are really united; united on principles of liberty, in opposition to an obscure remnant of one party, who disown those principles, and a mercenary detachment from the other, who betray them.

How this change for the better comes to have been wrought in an age, when most things have changed for the worse; and since it hath been wrought, why the old distinctions are kept up in some measure, will I think be accounted for in treating this subject farther. At present, what shall we say to those who publickly speak of this national union as impracticable and chimerical; yet privately act against it, with all their might, as a practicable thing, and a real evil to them? If it be as complete and as well cemented, as I imagine it is, and as every honest Briton wishes it may be; nay, if there be nothing more than a strong tendency on all sides towards it, which no man of the least observation and candour will deny; it is surely the duty of every one, who desires the prosperity of his country, to seize the opportunity, to cultivate and improve it. If men are to be known by their works, the works of those, who oppose this

union, denote them sufficiently. Wicked and unhappy men! who seek their private safety, in opposing publick good. Weak and silly men! who vainly imagine that they shall pass for the nation, and the nation for a faction; that they shall be judged in the right, and the whole body of the people in the wrong——On whom would they impose?——How long do they imagine, that so unequal a contest can last?

There is no complaint which hath been more constantly in the mouths, no grief hath lain more heavily at the hearts of all good men, than thoſe about our national divisions; about the spirit of party, which inspires animosity and breeds rancour; which hath so often destroyed our inward peace; weakened our national strength, and sullied our glory abroad. It is time therefore that all, who desire to be esteemed good men, and to procure the peace, the strength, and the glory of their country, by the only means, by which they can be procured effectually, should join their efforts to heal our national divisions, and to change the narrow spirit of party into a diffusive spirit of publick benevolence.

That we may be more encouraged to do so, it will be of use perhaps to consider, in some particulars, what advances are already made towards that national union, without which no national good can be expected in such circumstances as ours.

Let us begin with the present temper of the members of the church of England towards the dissenters.

dissenters. Those laws, by which the latter were debarred from serving God after their own way, have not been these many years a terrour, to them. Those which were designed to hinder the propagation of their principles, and those which shut the door of all publick preferment, even to such among them as conformed occasionally, are repealed. Far from desiring to impose any new hardships upon them, even those who have been reputed their enemies, and who have acted as such on several occasions, acknowledge their errour. Experience hath removed prejudice. They see that indulgence hath done what severity never could; and from the frankness of these, if I was a dissenter, I should sooner entertain hopes of future favour, than from the double dealing of those who lean on the dissenters when they are out of power, and who esteem them a load upon them when they are in it. We are now in the true and only road, which can possibly lead to a perfect reconciliation among protestants; to the abolition of all their differences; or to terms of difference so little essential, as to deserve none of distinction. These happy ends must be obtained by mutual good-will. They never can be obtained by force. It is true, indeed, that force, which is the effect of a majority and superior power, may support a rivalship and erect even counterestablishments. But then, by the same means, our ancient disputes will be revived; the church will be thought really in danger; and religious feuds, which have been so long and so beneficially kept down, will once more

more disturb the peace of the state. It is a certain truth, that our religious and civil contests have mutually, and almost alternately, raised and fomented each other. Churchmen and dissenters have sometimes differed, and sometimes thought, or been made to think, that they differed, at least, as much about civil as religious matters. There can be therefore no way so effectual to compose their differences on the latter, as to improve the growing union between them on the former. "Idem sentire de republicâ," to think alike about political affairs, hath been esteemed necessary to constitute and maintain private friendships. It is obviously more essential in publick friendships. Bodies of men in the same society can never unite, unless they unite on this principle; and if they once unite on this principle, they will unite on all others, or they will readily and cheerfully make one another easy about them.——Let me speak plainly. It becomes a man to do so, who means honestly.——In our political divisions of whig and tory, the dissenters have adhered to the former, and they want no apology for doing so. They joined themselves to those with whom they agreed, and stood in opposition to those with whom they differed in principles of government. There could be no objection brought against them on this account. They certainly did not follow power. They did not act like a sect, or a faction, who had, and pursued, an interest distinct from the interest of the whole. Their nonconformity hath nothing to do here. They concurred with conformists;

formists; and if they had been conformists themselves, as they were dissenters, they would have acted in the same manner. But if this division of parties, on the same principles, subsists no longer; if there be in truth neither a tory, nor a whig, as I have said above, but a court and a country party in being; if the political principles, which the dissenters have formerly avowed, are manifestly pursued on one side; and those which they have opposed, or others equivalent to them in their effects, are pursued on the other; can the dissenters hesitate about the option they are to make? I am persuaded they cannot. I know that several among them do not. What might be, and certainly would be said, if they made their option to stand by the m**, I will not so much as suggest. What must be the consequence of their standing by the nation, in opposition to him, for between these two powers the present contest lies, it is easy to tell, and impossible to deny. They will prove in this case to the whole world, that the spirit of liberty animates, and conscience alone determines their conduct. They, who could never brook a regal, will have the merit of saving their country from a ministerial tyranny; and their country will owe them all the acknowledgments, which are due from good and grateful citizens of the same commonwealth.

As to the other great and national division of whig and tory; he, who recollects what hath passed in parliament, and observes what passes out of it, can differ very little in his opinion from what

what hath been said concerning it. The principal articles of your civil faith, publiſhed some time ago, or, to speak more properly, the civil faith of the old whigs, are assented and consented to by the country party; and I say, upon good authority, that if this creed was made a test of political orthodoxy, there would appear at this time but very few heretics among us. How different the case is on the other side will appear, not only from the actions, but from the principles of the court-party, as we find them avowed in their writings; principles more dangerous to liberty, though not so directly, nor so openly levelled against it, than even any of those, bad as they were, which some of these men value themselves for having formerly opposed.

In short, the revolution is looked upon by all sides as a new æra; but the settlement then made is looked upon by the whole country-party as a new magna charta, from whence new interests, new principles of government, new measures of submission, and new obligations arise. From thence we must date both king and people. His majesty derives his title from acts, made in consequence of it. We likewise derive, not our privileges, for they were always ours, but a more full and explicit declaration, and a more solemn establishment of them, from the same period. On this foundation all the reasonable, independent whigs and tories unite. They could unite on this alone; for the whigs have always professed the principles which paved the way for the revolution;

and

and whatever the tories may have professed, they acted upon the same principles, or they acted upon none, which would be too absurd to assert, when they brought about that great event, in concert with the rest of the nation, as I shall some time or other prove.

To this magna charta, and these principles, let us adhere inviolably, in opposition to the two extremes mentioned by me at the beginning of this letter, viz. to those who disown them, and to those who betray them.——Let neither the polemical skill of Lesly,[1] nor the antique erudition of Bedford,[2] persuade us to put on again those old shackles of false law, false reason, and false Gospel, which were forged before the revolution, and broken to pieces by it.——As little let us suffer the arch slyness of G * *,[3] the dogmatical dryness of H * *,[4] or the sousing prostitution of S * *[5] to slip new shackles on us, which are inconsistent with the constituent principles of our establishment.——Let us maintain and improve the national union, so happily begun, and bless God for disposing the temper of the nation almost universally to it.——Such a coalition hath been long wanted in this kingdom, and never more than at this important crisis; for on this it will depend whether they, who not only oppose the progress of that growing corruption, which had well nigh overspread the land, but endeavour to extirpate it by the roots, shall prevail; or they who nourish and propagate it, who eat themselves, and tempt others to eat the baneful fruit it bears.——On this it will

1 Charles Leslie published the "Rehearsals", a political paper. 1704.
2 Hilkiah Bedford, "Hereditary Right of Crown of England" 1713
3 Gibson wrote "Memoirs of Q. Anne. 1729.
4. Thos Hearne "Vindication of those who take Oath of Allegiance"
5 [illegible] Sherlock "Case of Allegiance due &c. 1691

will depend whether they shall prevail, who constantly insist against the continuance of a standing army in time of peace, agreeably to the principles of our constitution; or they who plead for it, and endeavour to make it a necessary part of that constitution, though incompatible with publick liberty. ——On this it will depend whether they shall prevail, who endeavour to conceal the frauds which are practised, and to screen the fraudulent, at the risk of ruining credit, and destroying trade, as well as to monopolize in the hands of a few the whole wealth of the nation; or they who do their utmost to bring the former to light, and the latter to punishment, at a time when glaring fraud, or very strong symptoms of fraud, appear in so many parts of publick management, from some of the greatest companies down to the turnpike at Hyde-park corner.——On this it will depend whether they shall prevail, who desire that Great Britain should maintain such a dignity and prudent reserve in the broils of Europe, as become her situation, suit her interest, and alone can enable her to cast the balance; or they who are eager, on every occasion, to prostitute her dignity, to pawn her purse, and to sacrifice her commerce, by intangling her not only too much with the other great powers of Europe, from whom she may sometimes want reciprocal engagements, but even with those diminutive powers, from whom it would be ridiculous to expect any.

I am, SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

SIR,

WHILE I was writing my last letter to you, it came into my thoughts that nothing would illustrate the subject better, nor enforce more strongly the exhortation to a union of parties, in support of that constitution, on the terms of which alone all right to govern us, and all our obligation to obey is now founded, than an inquiry into the rise and progress of our late parties; or a short history of toryism and whiggism from their cradle to their grave; with an introductory account of their genealogy and descent.

Your papers have been from the first consecrated to the information of the people of Britain; and I think they may boast very justly a merit singular enough, that of never speaking to the passions, without appealing to the reason of mankind. It is fit they should keep up this character in the strictest manner, while they are employed on the most important subject, and published at the most important crisis. I shall therefore execute my design with sincerity and impartiality. I shall certainly not flatter, and I do not mean to offend. Reasonable men and lovers of truth, in whatever party they have been engaged, will not be offended at writings, which claim no regard but on this account, that they are founded in reason and truth, and speak with boldness what reason and truth conspire to dictate. As for the drummers and trumpeters of faction, who

who are hired to drown the voice of both in one perpetual din of clamour, and would endeavour to drown, in the same manner, even the dying groans of their country, if she was already brought into that extreme condition; they shall not provoke me to break a most contemptuous silence. The subject is too solemn. They may prophane it, by writing on it. Far be it from me to become guilty of the same crime, by answering them.

If the inquiry I am going to make into the rise and progress of our late parties should produce in any degree the good which I intend, it will help to confirm and improve the national union, so happily begun, by taking off some remains of shyness, distrust, and prejudice, which may still hang about men, who think alike, and who press on from different quarters to the same common point of view. It will help to unmask more effectually the wicked conduct of those, who labour with all the skill, and, which is much more considerable, with all the authority they possess, to keep up the division of parties; that each of these may continue to be, in its turn, what all of them have been too often and too long, the instruments and the victims of private ambition. It will do something more. A few reflections on the rise and progress of our distemper, and the rise and progress of our cure, will help us of course to make a true judgment on our present state, and will point out to us, better perhaps than any other method, the specific remedies still necessary to preserve our constitution

tion in health and vigour.—Having premised this, I come to the point.

Queen Elizabeth designed, and the nation called king James to the throne, though the whole Scottish line had been excluded by the will of Henry the eighth, made indeed under the authority of an act of parliament, and yet little regarded either by the parliament, or the people. As soon as he was on the throne, a flattering act of recognition passed; for though all princes are flattered on their first accession, yet those princes are sure to be flattered most, who deserve panegyrick least. In this act the parliament acknowledged, on the knees of their hearts, such was the cant of the age, the indubitable right, by which they declared that the crown descended to him immediately, on the decease of queen Elizabeth. Of this act, and of the use which some men, very weakly I think, endeavoured to make of it, I shall have occasion to speak hereafter. I would only observe here, that this is the æra of hereditary right, and of all those exalted notions, concerning the power and prerogative of kings, and the sacredness of their persons. All together they composed such a system of absurdity as had never been heard of in this country, till that anointed pedant broached them. They have been spoken of pretty much at large in your papers; particularly in some of those published under the name of Oldcastle. To them I refer. *

To assert that the extravagant principles of ecclesiastical and civil government, which began

* Remarks on the History of England. Vol. II.

to be propagated in this reign, and were carried still higher in the next, gave occasion to those of another kind, or of another extreme, which were taught with success, and gained by degrees great vogue in the nation, would be too much. Opinions very different from those which received the sanction of a legal establishment in church and state had crept about obscurely, if not silently, even while the government of Elizabeth lasted. But this I say; that the principles by which king James and king Charles the first governed, and the excesses of hierarchical and monarchical power, exercised in consequence of them, gave great advantage to the opposite opinions, and entirely occasioned the miseries which followed. Phrenzy provoked phrenzy, and two species of madness infected the whole mass of the people. It hath cost us a century to lose our wits, and to recover them again.

If our greivances under king Charles the first had been redressed by a sober, regular, parliamentary reformation of the state; or, if the civil war happening, a new government had been established on principles of the constitution, not of faction, of liberty, not of licentiousness, as there was on the abdication of king James the second; we may conclude, both from reason and experience that the absurd and slavish doctrines I have mentioned would have been exploded early. They would have been buried in the recent grave of him who first devised them; and the memory of him and of them would have stunk together in

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the nostrils of mankind. But the contrary fell out. The state was subverted, instead of being reformed; and all the fury of faction and enthusiasm was employed to destroy the constitution to the very foundations. A natural consequence followed. If the principles of king James's and king Charles's reigns had been disgraced by better, they would not have risen again: but they were only kept down for a time by worse; and therefore they rose again at the restoration, and revived with the monarchy. Thus that epidemical taint, with which king James infected the minds of men, continued upon us: and it is scarce hyperbolical to say, that this prince hath been the original cause of a series of misfortunes to this nation, as deplorable as a lasting infection of our air, of our water, or our earth, would have been. The spirit of his reign was maintained in that of his son, (for how could it well be otherwise, when the same ministers were continued in power?) and the events of both produced the civil war. The civil war ended in the death of the king, and the exile of his family. The exile of these princes reconciled them to the religion of Rome, and to the politicks of foreign nations, in such degrees as their different characters admitted. Charles sipped a little of the poisonous draught, but enough however to infect his whole conduct. As for James,

— Ille impiger hausit
Spumantem pateram:

he drank the chalice off to the lowest and foulest dregs.

That principles as absurd as these in their nature,

ture, and as terrible in their consequences, such as would shock the common sense of a Samojede, or a Hottentot, and had just before deluged the nation in blood, should come into vogue again at the restoration, will not appear strange to those who carry themselves back as it were to that point of time. The wounds of the civil war were bleeding, and the resentments of the cavaliers, who came into power at court and in parliament, were at their height. No wonder then if few men had, in such a ferment as this, penetration enough to discern, or candour enough to acknowledge, or courage enough to maintain, that the principles we speak of were truly and primarily the cause of all their misfortunes. The events, which proved them so, were recent; but for that very reason, because they were recent, it was natural for men in such a circumstance as this, to make wrong judgments about them. It was natural for the royal party to ascribe all their and their country's misfortunes, without any due distinction, to the principles on which king Charles and even king James had been opposed; and to grow more zealous for those on which the governments of these two princes had been defended, and for which they had suffered. Add to this the national transport, on so great a revolution; the excess of joy which many felt, and many feigned; the adulation employed by many to acquire new merit; and by many to atone for past demerit; and you will find reason to be surprised, not that the same principles of government, as had threatened our liberties once, and must by necessary consequence do so again, were established;

established; but that our liberties were not immediately, and at once given up. That they were saved, we owe not to parliament, no not to the convention parliament, who brought the king home; but to those great and good men, Clarendon and Southampton. Far from taking advantage of the heat and fervour of the times, to manage parliaments into scandalous jobs, and fatal compliances with the crown, to their immortal honour, with gratitude and reverence to their memories be it spoken, they broke the army, stinted the revenue, and threw their master on the affections of his people.—But I return.

Beside these reasons, drawn from the passions of men, others of a more sober kind may be given, to account for the making a settlement at the restoration upon principles too near akin to those, which had prevailed before the war, and which had in truth caused it. Certain it is, that although the nonconformists were stunned by the blow they had just received, and though their violence was restrained by the force of the present conjuncture; yet they still existed. Symptoms of this appeared, even while the government was settling, and continued to appear long after it was settled. Now, every symptom of this kind renewed the dread of relapsing into those miseries, from which the nation had so lately recovered itself; and this dread had the natural effect of all extreme fears. It hurried men into every principle, as well as measure, which seemed the most opposite to those of the persons feared, and the most likely, though at any other risk, to defeat

their designs, and to obviate the present danger, real or imaginary. May we not fairly conjecture, for it is but conjecture, something more? In such a temper of mind, and such a situation of circumstances, might not even those, who saw how groundless and dangerous such extravagant notions about the right, power and prerogative of kings were, imagine however that it was a part of prudence to give way to them, and to countenance them in the present conjuncture; to suffer the opinions of the nation to be bent too far on one side, as they had been bent too far on the other; not that they might remain crooked, but that they might become straight?

The same spirit and much the same reasons that determined our settlement, at the restoration, upon such high principles of monarchy, prevailed relatively to our religious differences, and the settlement of the church. I shall speak of it with that freedom which a man may take, who is conscious that he means nothing but the publick good, hath no by-ends, nor is under the influence of serving any particular cause.

I say then very frankly, that the church and the king having been joined in all the late contests, both by those who attacked them, and those who defended them, ecclesiastical interests, resentments, and animosities came in to the aid of secular, in making the new settlement. Great lenity was shown at the restoration, in looking backward; unexampled and unimitated mercy to particular men, which deserved no doubt much applause.

This conduct would have gone far towards restoring

storing the nation to it's primitive temper and integrity, to it's old good manners, it's old good humour, and it's old good nature, (expressions of my lord chancellor Clarendon, which I could never read without being moved and softened,) if great severity had not been exercised immediately after, in looking forwards, and great rigour used to large bodies of men, which certainly deserves censure, as neither just, nor politick.—I say, not just; because there is, after all, a real and a wide difference between moral and party justice. The one is founded in reason; the other takes it's colour from the passions of men, and is but another name for injustice. Moral justice carries punishment as far as reparation, and necessary terrour require; no farther. Party justice carries it to the full extent of our power, and even to the gorging and sating of our revenge; from whence it follows, that injustice and violence, once begun, must become perpetual in the successive revolutions of parties, as long as these parties exist.—I say, not politick; because it contradicted the other measures taken for quieting the minds of men. It alarmed all the sects anew; confirmed the implacability, and whetted the rancour of some; disappointed and damped a spirit of reconciliation in others; united them in a common hatred to the church; and roused in the church a spirit of intolerance and persecution. This measure was the more imprudent, because the opportunity seemed fair to take advantage of the resentments of the presbyterians against the other sect-

aries, and to draw them, without persecuting the others, by the cords of love into the pale of the church, instead of driving them back by severe usage into their ancient confederacies. But when resentments of the sort we now mention were let loose, to aggravate those of the other sort, there was no room to be surprised at the violences which followed; and they, who had acted greater, could not complain of these, great as they were, with any very good grace.

If we may believe one *, who certainly was not partial against these sects, both presbyterians and independents had carried the principles of rigour, in the point of conscience, much higher, and acted more implacably upon it, than ever the church of England hath done, in it's angriest fits. The securing themselves therefore against those, who had ruined them and the constitution once already, was a plausible reason for the church-party to give, and I doubt not the true and sole motive of many for exercising, and persisting in the exercise of great severity. General, prudential arguments might, and there is reason to believe they did, weigh with particular men; but they could have little force, at such a time, on numbers. As little could some other considerations have then, whatever they have now. The promises at Breda, for instance, and the terms of the declaration sent from thence, could not be urged with force to a parliament, who had no mind, and was strictly under no obligation,

* Dr. Burnet, afterward bishop of Salisbury, in one of his tracts.

to

to make good such promises as the king had made, beyond his power of promising, if taken absolutely; or from which, if taken conditionally, he was discharged, on the refusal of parliament to confirm them.—Thus again, the merit pleaded by the presbyterians, on account of the share they had in the restoration, which was very real and very considerable, could avail however but little. That they went along with the national torrent, in restoring the constitution of church and state, could not be denied. But then it was remembered too, that these fruits of repentance came late; not till they had been oppressed by another sect, who turned upon them, wrested the power out of their hands, and made them feel, what they had made others feel, the tyranny of a party.

Such reasons and motives, as I have mentioned, prevailed; and worse than these would have been sufficient, when the passions of men ran so high, to lay the dissenters, without any distinction, under extreme hardships. They seemed to be the principal object of the fears and jealousies of parliament. Addresses were continually made, and the edge of the law continually whetted against them, from 1660 to 1669, when the law for suppressing conventicles, and the last of these penal statutes passed, as I remember. Experience will justify me for saying, that this long and extreme rigour was unwise, as well as unjust. It appears indeed, from the memorials of those times, that they who suffered had given abundant provocation, though not sufficient excuse, to the rigour under which

which they suffered. Some former hardships, which the dissenters had endured from the church, made them more violent against it, when they got possession of a usurped power. Just so the violence, which they exercised at that time, stimulated the severity they felt in their turn, when the legal constitution of the church was restored. Notwithstanding all which, I incline, upon very good reasons, to think that this severity was not in the first design of the ministers, nor would have been shown, if another fatal influence had not prevailed. The influence I mean is that of popery. It prevailed from the first moments to the last of the reign of king Charles the second. The best ministers were frequently driven off their bias by it. The worst had a sure hold on their master, by complying with it. On the occasion now mentioned, this influence and the artifice of the popish faction worked very fatally on the passions of parties, and the private interests of individuals; and the ministers, and the church, and the dissenters, were bubbles alike of their common enemy. Barefaced popery could ask no favour, because popery could expect none. Protestant dissenters were therefore to serve as stalking horses, that papists might creep behind them, and have hopes of being some time or other admitted with them. The church party was hallooed on the dissenters; while the dissenters were encouraged to unite and hold out; while they were flattered with a high opinion of their own strength, and the king's favour; and while some leading men among them, who thought it better

to

to be at the head of a sect than at the tail of an establishment, were perhaps encouraged and confirmed in that thought by the private applications of the court.

These arts, these wicked arts (for such they were) prevailed; and though the two thousand ministers, who went out of their churches on one day, were far from being all of the same mind, or having one positive consistent scheme; though many of them must have lost their benefices, even if they had complied with the act of uniformity, because they were intruders, and in actual possession of benefices legally belonging to others; yet, by uniting in the point of nonconformity, they appeared as one body, and in some sense they were so. Several of them were popular for certain modes of devotion, suited to the humour of the time; and several were men eminent for true learning and unaffected piety. They increased the zeal of their flocks, and created compassion in others. Here the court began to reap the fruits of their management, in the struggle for a toleration. I use the word, though I know it may be simply cavilled at. The first step made was an application to the king, who declared himself ready and willing to dispense, in their favour, with several things in the act of uniformity: and thus the dissenters were made, by the severity of the parliament and the intrigues of the court, the instruments of introducing a dispensing power. Such attempts were made more than once; but happily failed as often as made, through the vigorous opposition

position of parliament; till at last the scene began to open more, and the dissenters to see that they were made the tools of promoting what they never intended, the advancement of the prerogative above law, and the toleration of popery against it.

To conclude. By such means as I have described, the constitution of parties after the restoration preserved unhappily too near a resemblance to the constitution of parties before the war. The prerogative was not indeed carried so high in some instances, as James and Charles the first had attempted to carry it. Nay, some supports of it were bought off, and taken away; and others more dangerous, as we have observed, were prevented by the virtue of the men at that time in power. But still the government was established on principles, sufficient to invite a king to exercise arbitrary power, and support him by their consequences in the exercise of it afterward; so that in this respect, the seeds of future divisions were sowed abundantly. The dissenters had, indeed, lost much of their credit, and all their power. But still they had numbers, and property, and industry, and compassion for them; so that here was another crop of dissensions planted to nurse up, and to strengthen the other. They did not inflame the contest, which followed, into a civil war, as they had helped to do formerly; but I think that without them, and the disunion and hatred among protestants, consequent upon them, the zeal against popery could not have run into a kind of factious

fury,

fury, as we shall be obliged to confess it did. I think that fears of falling once more under presbyterian, or republican power, could not have been wrought up in the manner they were, towards the end of this reign, so as to drown even the fear of popery itself; so as to form a party, in favour of a popish successor; so as to transport both clergy and laity into an avowal of principles, which must have reduced us to be at this time slaves, not freemen, papists, not protestants; if the very men, who had avowed such principles, had not saved themselves and us, in direct opposition to them.—But I am running into the subject of another letter, when this is grown too prolix already.

I am, SIR,
Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

SIR,

THE sum of what hath been said, concerning the settlement of church and state, and the division of parties at the restoration, amounts to this; that as the attempts of king James and king Charles the first, against the spirit of the constitution, threw the nation into a civil war, and all the miserable consequences, both necessary and contingent, of that calamity; so the fury, enthusiasm, and madness of those factions which arose during that unnatural ferment, frightened the nation back, if not into all, yet more generally perhaps than before, into most of the notions that were established

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to justify the excesses of former reigns. Hereditary, indefeasable right, passive obedience and nonresistance, those corner-stones, which are an improper foundation for any superstructure, but that of tyranny, were made, even by parliament, the foundation of the monarchy; and all those, who declined an exact and strict conformity to the whole establishment of the church, even to the most minute parts of it, were deprived of the protection, nay, exposed to the prosecution of the state. Thus one part of the nation stood proscribed by the other; the least, indeed, by the greatest; whereas a little before the greatest stood proscribed by the least. Roundhead and cavalier were, in effect, no more. Whig and tory were not yet in being. The only two apparent parties were those of churchmen and dissenters; and religious differences alone at this time maintained the distinction.

Such was the state of party, upon the meeting of the first parliament called by king Charles the second, and for some years afterward, as nearly as I have been able to observe by what I have read in history, and received from tradition.—How the notions then in vogue began to change, and this spirit to decline, some time after the restoration; how the zeal of churchmen and dissenters against one another began to soften, and a court and country party to form themselves; how faction mingled itself again in the contest, and renewed the former resentments and jealousies; how whig and tory arose, the furious offspring of those inauspicious parents round-head and cavalier;

ther; how the proceedings of one party might have thrown us back into a civil war, confusion and anarchy; how the success of the other had like to have entailed tyranny on the state, and popery in church; how the revolution did, and could alone, deliver us from the grievances we felt, and from the dangers we feared; how this great event was brought about by a formal departure of each side from the principles objected to them by the other; how this renewal of our constitution, on the principles of liberty, by the most solemn, deliberate, national act, that ever was made, did not only bind at least every one of those, who concurred in any degree to bring it about; (and that description includes almost the whole nation) but how absurd it is for any man, who was born since that æra, or who, being born before it, hath been bound by no particular, legal tye to any other settlement, to be willing to give up the advantages of the present constitution, any more than he would give up the privileges of the great charter, which was made and ratified so many ages ago; all these points are to be now touched in that summary manner, which I have prescribed to myself, and which will be sufficient, in so plain a case, where men are to be reminded of what they know already, rather than to be informed; and to be confirmed, not to be convinced.

I proceed therefore to observe, that the nation began to be indisposed to the court, soon after the restoration. The sale of Dunkirk helped to ruin a great and good minister, though it be still doubtful

doubtful at least, notwithstanding the clamour raised, and the negotiations with d'Estrades so much insisted upon, whether he was strictly answerable for this measure.—Who knows how soon the reestablishment of the same port and harbour may be laid in form to the charge of those two men, who are strictly and undeniably answerable for it, and who stagger already under the weight of so many other just imputations?

The first Dutch war, which was lightly and rashly undertaken, and which ended ignominiously for the nation, augmented the publick indisposition. Nay misfortunes, such as the plague, and the burning of London, as well as mismanagement, had this effect. But we must place at the head of all a jealousy of popery, which was well founded, and therefore gathered strength daily. This soon heated the minds of men to such a degree, that it seems almost wonderful the plague was not imputed to the papists, as peremptorily as the fire.

The death of my lord Southampton, and the disgrace and banishment of my lord Clarendon, made room for new causes of jealousy and dissatisfaction; and the effects increased in proportion. These two noble lords had stood in the breach against popery and foreign politicks; and what one of them said of the other, that is, Southampton of Clarendon, may be applied with justice to both. They were true protestants, and honest Englishmen. While they were in place, our laws, our religion, and our liberties were in safety.

When

When they were removed, England felt the ill effects of the change; for when they were removed, all these were in danger. How glorious a panegyrick is this, in which the unanimous voice of posterity does and must agree! It is preferable surely to all the titles, and honours, and estates, which those illustrious patriots left behind them: and so I persuade myself it is esteemed by the young noblemen, who are heirs to their virtues as well as their fortunes.

King Charles, and more than he, the duke and the popish faction, were now at liberty to form new schemes; or rather to pursue old ones, with less reserve, against the religion and liberty of England. As soon as the famous cabal had the whole administration of affairs, these designs were pushed almost without any reserve at all.—I am not writing the history of this reign; nor have I undertaken any thing more than to make a few observations on the several turns of parties in it. I need not therefore descend into particular proofs of the designs which I attribute to the court; nor into a deduction of the measures taken to promote them, and the efforts made to defeat them. That these designs were real, can be doubted of by no man; since without quoting many printed accounts, which are in the hands of every one, or insisting on other proofs which have not seen the light, and such there are, the abbot Primi's relation of the secret negotiations between the king and his sister, the duchess of Orleans, published in 1682, as I think, and immediately suppressed,

pressed, as well as the history of the jesuit d'Orleans, written on memorials furnished to him by king James the second, put the whole matter out of dispute, and even beyond the reach of cavil. It is sufficient for my purpose to observe, that the tide of party, which had run so strongly for the court, and had been seldom so much as slackened hitherto, began now to turn, and to run year after year more strongly the other way.

When this parliament sat down, for it deserves our particular observation that both houses were full of zeal for the present government, and of resentment against the late usurpations, there was but one party in parliament; and no other party could raise it's head in the nation. This might have been the case much longer, probably as long as king Charles had sat on the throne, if the court had been a little honester, or a little wiser. No parliament ever did more to gain their prince than this. They seemed for several years, to have nothing so much at heart as securing his government, advancing his prerogative, and filling his coffers. The grants they made him were such as passed for instances of profusion in those days; when one million two hundred thousand pounds a year for the civil list, the fleet, the guards and garrisons, and all the ordinary expenses of the government, was thought an exorbitant sum; how little a figure soever it would make in our times, when two thirds of that sum, at least, are appropriated to the use of the civil list singly. But all this was

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to no purpose: a foreign interest prevailed; a cabal governed; and sometimes the cabal, and sometimes a prime minister had more credit with the king than the whole body of his people. When the parliament saw that they could not gain him over to his own, and to their common interest; nor prevail on him by connivance, compliance, and other gentle methods; they turned themselves to such as were rough, but agreeable to law and the custom of parliament, as well as proportionable to the greatness of the exigency. That they lost their temper, on some particular occasions, must not be denied. They were men, and therefore frail: but their frailties of this kind proceeded from their love of their country. They were transported, when they found that their religion and liberty were constantly in danger from the intrigues of a popish faction; and they would have been so transported, no doubt, if liberty alone had been attacked by a protestant faction. Then it was that this high-church parliament grew favourable to protestant dissenters, and ready to make that just distinction, so long delayed, between them and popish recusants, that the whole protestant interest might unite in the common cause. Then it was, that this prerogative-parliament defied prerogative, in defence of their own privileges, and of the liberties of their country. Then it was, that this passive obedience and nonresistance parliament went the utmost lengths of resistance, in a parliamentary way; and the necessary consequence of the steps they made in this way must have been resistance in another, if the king had

not dropped his ministers, retracted his pretensions, redressed some and given expectation of redressing other grievances. In fine, this pensioner-parliament, as it hath been stiled, with some corruption in the house, and an army sometimes at the door of it, disbanded the army in England, and protested against the militia settled in Scotland by act of parliament, and appointed to march for any service, wherein the king's honour, authority, and greatness were concerned, in obedience to the orders of the privy council. That I may not multiply particular instances, they not only did their utmost to secure their country against immediate danger, but projected to secure it against remote danger, by an exclusion of the duke of York from the crown, after they had endeavoured strenuously, but in vain, to prevent his entailing popery more easily upon us, by his marriage with a popish princess; for he had declared himself a papist with as much affectation, as if he expected to grow popular by it; had already begun to approve his zeal, and exercise his talent in conversions, by that of his first wife; and was notoriously the agent of Rome and France, in order to seduce his brother into stronger measures, than king Charles was willing to take. King Charles, to use an expression of the lord Halifax of that age, would trot; but his brother would gallop.

When I reflect on the particulars here mentioned, and a great many others, which might be mentioned to the honour of this parliament, I cannot hear it called the pensioner-parliament, as it were by way of eminence, without a degree of honest indig-

indignation; especially in the age in which we live, and by some of those who affect the most to bestow upon it this ignominious appellation. Pensions indeed, to the amount of seven or eight thousand pounds, as I remember, were discovered to have been given to some members of the house of commons. But then let it be remembered likewise, that this expedient of corrupting parliaments began under the administration of that boisterous, overbearing, dangerous minister, Clifford. As long as there remained any pretence to say, that the court was in the interest of the people, the expedient of bribery was neither wanted, nor practised. When the court was evidently in another interest, the necessity and the practice of bribing the representatives of the people commenced. Should a parliament of Britain act in compliance with a court, against the sense and interest of the nation, mankind would be ready to pronounce very justly, that such a parliament was under the corrupt influence of the court. But, in the case now before us, we have a very comfortable example of a court wicked enough to stand in need of corruption, and to employ it; and of a parliament virtuous enough to resist the force of this expedient; which Philip of Macedon boasted that he employed to invade the liberties of other countries; and which had been so often employed by men of less genius, as well as rank, to invade the liberties of their own. All that corruption could do in this parliament, was to maintain the appearance of a

court-party, while the measures of the court united a country-party, in opposition to them. Neither places nor pensions could hinder courtiers in this parliament from voting, on many signal occasions, against the court; nor protect either those who drew the king into ill measures, nor those who complied with him in them. Nay, this pensioner-parliament, if it must be still called so, gave one proof of independency, beside that of contriving a test in 1675, to purge their members on oath from all suspicion of corrupt influence, which ought to wipe off this stain from the most corrupt. They drove one of their paymasters out of court, and impeached the other, in the fullness of his power; even at a time, when the king was so weak as to make, or so unhappy as to be forced to make, on account of pensions privately negotiated from France, the cause of the crown and the cause of the minister one, and to blend their interests together.

What I have said to the honour of the long parliament is just; because in fact the proceedings of that parliament were agreeable to the representation I have given of them. But now, if some severe censor should appear, and insist that the dame was chaste, only because she was not enough tempted; that more pensions would have made more pensioners; that much money and little prerogative is more dangerous to liberty than much prerogative and little money; and that the worst and weakest minister king Charles ever had might have been absolute in this very parliament, whose character

character I defend, if such a minister had been able to enlist, with places, pensions, and occasional bribes, not a slender majority, which the defection of a few might at any time defeat, but such a bulky majority, as might impose on itself: if any one, I say, should refine in this manner, and continue to insist that such a minister, with such a purse, would have stood his ground in the parliament I speak of, with how much contempt and indignation soever he might have been every where treated by the people; I shall not presume to assert the contrary. It might have been so. Our safety was owing as much, perhaps, to the poverty of the court, as to the virtue of the parliament. We might have lost our liberties. But then I would observe before I conclude, that if this be true, the preservation of our religion and liberty, at that time, was owing to these two circumstances; first, that king Charles was not parsimonious, but squandered on his pleasures, what he might have employed to corrupt this parliament; secondly, that the ministers in that reign, fingering no money but the revenue, ordinary and extraordinary, had no opportunity to filch in the pockets of every private man, and to bribe the bubbles very often with their own money; as might be done now, when funding hath been so long in fashion, and the greatest minister hath the means of being the greatest stockjobber, did not the eminent integrity of the minister, and the approved virtue of the age, secure us from any such danger.

We have now brought the deduction of parties very near to the era of whig and tory; intowhich the court found means to divide the nation, and by this division to acquire in the nation a superiority, which had been attempted ineffectually, even by corruption in parliament.——But this I reserve for another letter, and am,

SIR, Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

THERE is a passage in Tully so extremely applicable to the mischievous, but transitory, prevalence of thoſe principles of government, which king James the first imported into this country, that since it occurs to my memory, I cannot begin this letter better than by quoting it to you, and making a short commentary on it. "Opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat *." Groundless opinions are destroyed, but rational judgments, or the judgments of nature, are confirmed by time. It is Balbus, who makes this observation very properly, when he is about to prove the existence of a supreme being. The same observation might have been employed as properly, on other occasions, against Balbus himself; and the truth of it might have been ex-

* L. 2. de nat. deor.

emplified,

emplified, by comparing the paradoxes and superstitious opinions of his own sect, as well as the tales of a hippocentaur, or a chimæra, with the eternal truths of genuine theism, and sound philosophy. In short, the application of it might have been justly made then, and may be so now in numberless instances, taken from the most important subjects, on which the thoughts of men are exercised, or in which their interest, as men and members of society, are concerned.

The authority of a sect, and much more of a state, is able to inspire, and habit to confirm, the most absurd opinions. Passion, or interest, can create zeal. But nothing can give stability and durable uniformity to errour. Indolence, or ignorance, may keep it floating, as it were, on the surface of the mind, and sometimes hinder truth from penetrating; or force may maintain it in profession, when the mind assents to it no longer. But such opinions, like human bodies, tend to their dissolution from their birth. They will be soon rejected in theory, where men can think, and in practice, where men can act with freedom. They maintain themselves no longer, than the same means of seduction, which first introduced them, or the same circumstances, which first imposed them, attend and continue to support them. Men are dragged into them, and held down in them, by chains of circumstances. Break but these chains, and the mind returns with a kind of in intellectual elasticity to it's proper object, truth. This natural motion is so strong, that examples

examples might be cited of men embracing truth in practice, before they were convinced of it in theory. There are cases, where reason, freed from constraint, or roused by necessity, acts in some sort the part of instinct. We are impelled by one, before we have time to form an opinion. We are often determined by the other, against our opinion; that is, before we can be said properly to have changed it. But observe here the perverseness of that rational creature, man. When this happens; when the judgment of nature, for so we may speak after Tully, hath prevailed against the habitual prejudice of opinion; instead of acknowledging the victorious truth, which determined him to act, instead of condemning the erroneous opinion, against which he acted, he is too often apt to endeavour, peevishly and pedantically, to reconcile his actions to his errour; nay, to persist in renouncing true, and asserting false maxims, while he reaps the benefit, and maintains the consequences of the former.

You see whither we are brought by these general reflections. The absurd opinions, ("fictæ & vanæ" our Roman orator would have called them) about the right, power, and prerogative of kings, were so little able to take a deep root, and to stand the blasts of opposition, that few of those who drew their swords on the side of king Charles the first, were determined to it by them. I assert this fact on contemporary authority; on the authority even of some who were themselves engaged in that cause, from the beginning to the end of our civil wars.

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A more recent tradition assures us, that when the same opinions revived at the restoration, they did not sink deep even then into the minds of men; but floated so superficially there, that the parliament, (the very parliament, who had authorized them, and imposed them, as I observed in the last letter) proceeded a great way, and was ready to have proceeded farther, in direct opposition to them. A tradition still more recent will inform us, and that is to be the subject of this letter; that when these opinions revived again, at the latter end of the same reign, with an appearance of greater strength, and of a more national concurrence than ever, they revived but to be exploded more effectually than ever. King Charles made use of them to check the ferment raised against his government; but did not seem to expect that they would subsist long in force. His wiser brother depended much on them; but his dependence was vain. They were, at that time, wearing out apace; and they wore out the faster by the extravagant use which was made of them. They were in the mouths of many, but in the hearts of few; for almost all those who had them in their mouths, acted against them. Thus were these wicked and ridiculous principles of government twice revived and twice destroyed again, in less than thirty years from the restoration.

Ter si resurgat murus aheneus,
——Ter pereat!

The second revival of these principles, for enough hath been said of the first, happened soon after

after the dissolution of the long parliament; and there, I think, we must place the birth of whig and tory, though these parties did not grow up into full maturity, nor receive their names till about two years afterwards. The dissolution of this parliament was desired by men of very different complexions; by some, with factious views; by others, on this honest and true maxim, that a standing parliament, or the same parliament long continued, changes the very nature of the constitution, in the fundamental article on which the preservation of our whole liberty depends. But whatever motives others might have to desire this dissolution, the motives which prevailed on the king were probably these. This parliament not only grew more reserved in their grants of money, and stiff and inflexible in other matters, but seemed to have lost that personal regard which they had hitherto preserved for him. They brought their attacks home to his family; nay, to himself, in the heats which the discovery and prosecution of the popish plot occasioned. That on the queen provoked him. That on his brother embarrassed him. But that which provoked and embarrassed him both, was the prosecution of the earl of Danby, in the manner in which it was carried on. I will not descend into the particulars of an affair, at this time so well understood. This minister was turned out, and might have been punished in another manner, and much more severely than I presume any one, who knows the anecdotes of that age, thinks that he deserved to be,

be. But the intention of this attack, according to Rapin, was to show that the king, as well as his brother, was at the head of a conspiracy to destroy the governnent, and the protestant religion. This is a very bold assertion, and such a one as I do not pretend to warrant. But thus much is certain; that if the earl of Danby's impeachment had been tried, he must have justified himself, by showing what every one knew to be true, that the secret negotiations with France, and particularly that for money, were the king's negotiations, not his.

Now, whether the king hoped, by dissolving the parliament, to stop this prosecution; or to soften that of the popish plot; or to defeat the project of excluding the duke of York; his hopes were all disappointed. The following parliaments trod in the steps of this. How, indeed, could they do otherwise in those days, when the temper of the people determined the character of the parliament; when an influence on elections by prerogative, was long since over, and private, indirect means of gaining another more illegal influence were not yet found, or the necessary supports of such means were not yet acquired; when any man, who had desired people, who knew neither his fortune, his character, nor even his person, to choose him their representative in parliament, that is, to appoint him their trustee, would have been looked upon and treated as a madman; in short, when a parliament, acting against the declared sense of the nation, would have appeared as surprising a phenomenon in the moral world, as a retrograde motion of the sun

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or any other signal deviation of things from their ordinary course in the natural world?

There was indeed one point, which this parliament had extremely to heart, and which was no longer open to the parliaments that followed; I mean the conduct of the king in foreign affairs, during the war between France, and Holland and her allies, which ended by the treaty of Nimeguen. This war was not made in remote countries. It was made at our door. The motives to it, on the part of the aggressor, were neither injuries received, nor rights invaded; but a spirit of conquest, and barefaced usurpation. The interest we had in it was not such as depended on a long chain of contingencies, and required much subtlety to find out, but plain and immediate. The security, and at one time, the very existence of the Dutch commonwealth depended on the event of it. No wonder then, if the conduct of the king, who joined openly with France at first, and served her privately to better purpose at last, furnished ample matter to the publick discontent, and helped to increase the ill humours of succeeding parliaments on two other points, which were still open, and continued to draw their whole attention, as long as king Charles suffered any to sit, during the rest of his reign.

These two points were the prosecution of persons involved in the popish plot, and the exclusion of the duke of York. The first of these had prepared mankind for the second. The truth is, that if nothing which affected the duke had been produced,

produced, beside Coleman's letters, these proofs of his endeavours to subvert the religion and liberty of the people he pretended to govern, joined to so many others of publick notoriety, which showed the whole bent of his soul, and the whole scheme of his policy, would have afforded reason more than sufficient for sacrificing the interest, or even the right (if you will call it so) of one man to the preservation of three kingdoms. I know how partial we are in the judgments we make concerning ourselves, and our own interests. I know that this partiality is the immediate effect of self-love, the strongest spring in the human, nay in the whole animal system; and yet I cannot help being surprised, that a man should expect to be trusted with a crown, because he is born a prince, in a country where he could not be trusted by law, and ought not to be trusted in reason, with a constable's staff, if he was born a private person. Let me add, that such an expectation must be deemed more unreasonable in a descendant of Henry the fourth of France, if possible, than in any other man. The hereditary title of the house of Bourbon, on the extinction of that of Valois, was certainly as clear, and much better established by the laws and usages of France, than the hereditary right of any prince of the house of Stuart to the crown of England; and yet Henry the fourth, with all the personal qualifications which could recommend a prince to the esteem and love of his subjects, would never have been received into the throne by the French nation, if

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he had not been of the religion of that nation. On what foundation then could it be expected, that a protestant and a free people should be less animated by religion and liberty both, than their neighbours had been by religion alone; for liberty had nothing to do in that contest? Our fathers were thus animated, at the time I am speaking of. The long parliament projected the exclusion; and if the design had been carried on, in the spirit of a country party, it would probably have been carried on with a national concurrence, and would consequently have succeeded in effect, though not perhaps at once, nor in the very form at first proposed.

The violent and sanguinary prosecution of the popish plot was intended, no doubt, to make the success of the exclusion more secure, by raising the passions of men so high, that no expedient but an absolute and immediate exclusion, in the terms of the bill, should be thought sufficient. I cannot help saying on this occasion, that I wish this laudable and just design had not been pursued, by wading through the blood of so many men: enemies to our religion and liberty, indeed; but convicted, for the most part, on evidence which could hardly have passed at any other time. I wish we had done nothing which might be interpreted to the disrepute of our own religion, while we attempted to proscribe theirs. In fine, I wish, for the honour of my country, that the prosecutions on account of this plot, and much more on account of another, which was set up

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as a kind of retaliation for this, and which caused some of the noblest as well as some of the meanest blood in the nation to be spilt, could be erazed out of the records of history. But there is still a further reason to wish that greater temper had been joined, at this time, to the same zeal for religion and liberty. Men were made to believe that the king, who had yielded on so many other occasions, would yield on this; that he, who had given up so many ministers, would give up his brother at last; and that if the parliament would accept nothing less than the exclusion in their own way, it would be extorted from him. Now in this they were fatally deceived, and I continue to suspect, till I meet with better reasons than I have yet found to the contrary, that they were so deceived by the intrigues of two very opposite cabals; by the duke of York's, who were averse to all exclusions, whether absolute, or limited, but most to the last; and by the duke of Monmouth's, who could not find their account in any but an absolute exclusion; nor in this neither, unless the bill passed without any mention of the duke's daughters, as next in succession: to which, as bishop Burnet tells us, the prince of Orange was willing to comply, on the faith of assurances he had received from hence; a fact, which the bishop might know, and we may therefore take on his word, as extraordinary as it seems. I would only observe that king William, then prince of Orange, could have no reason for consenting that his wife's pretensions to the crown

should not be confirmed by an act which excluded her father, except one; and that was the necessity, real or apparent, of uniting different private interests in the publick measure of excluding the duke of York. Now, if this was his reason, the same reason proves, what shall be farther confirmed in the next letter, that a spirit of faction ran through the proceedings of those who promoted the bill of exclusion: and when faction was opposed to faction, there is no room to wonder, if that of the court prevailed. The king, who had not used to show firmness on other occasions, was firm on this: and the consequence of pushing the exclusion in this manner was giving him an opportunity of breaking the country party; of dividing the nation into whig and tory: of governing himself without parliaments; and of leaving the throne open to his brother, not only without our limitations or conditions, but with a more absolute power established, than any prince of his family had enjoyed.

As soon as the court had got, by management, a plausible pretence of objecting a spirit of faction to those in the opposition, the strength of the opposition was broken, because the national union was dissolved. A country party must be authorized by the voice of the country. It must be formed on principles of common interest. It cannot be united and maintained on the particular prejudices, any more than it can, or ought to be, directed to the particular interests of any set of men whatsoever. A party, thus constituted, is improperly

called party; it is the nation, speaking and acting in the discourse and conduct of particular men. It will prevail in all struggles sooner or later, as long as our constitution subsists; and nothing is more easy to demonstrate than this, that whenever such a party finds it difficult to prevail, our constitution is in danger; and when they find it impossible, our constitution must in fact be altered. On the other hand, whenever the prejudices and interests of particular sets of men prevail, the essence of a country party is annihilated, and the very appearance of it will soon be lost. Every man will resort in this case to that standard, under which he hath been marshalled in former divisions; to which his inclinations lead him; or which, though he does not intirely approve, yet he disapproves the least.

Such a dissolution of a country party was brought about at the period to which we are now come in our deduction of parties, by the passions, the publick pique, and private interest of particular men, and by the wily intrigues of the court. The dissolution of this party, and the new division of the nation into whig and tory, brought us into extreme danger. This extreme danger reunited the nation again, and a coalition of parties saved the whole. Such an experience might have showed them, that how opposite soever their professions were, yet they really differed more on negative than on positive principles; that they saw one another in a false light, for the most part, and fought with phantoms,

conjured up to maintain their division, rather than with real beings. Experience had not this happy effect soon. The swell of the sea continued long after the storm was over; and we have seen these parties kick and cuff like drunken men, when they were both of the same side.—Let us hope that this scene of tragical folly is over, to the disappointment of those who are conscious of past iniquity, or who meditate future mischief. There are no others who wish and endeavour to prolong it.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER V.

SIR,

NOTHING is more useful, nothing more necessary, in the conduct of publick affairs, than a just discernment of spirits. I mean here not only that natural private sagacity which is conversant about individuals, and enables some men to pry, as it were, into the heads and hearts of others, and to discover with them those latent principles which constitute their true characters, and are often disguised in outward action; but I mean principally that acquired, publick, political sagacity, which is of the same kind, though I think not altogether the same thing as the former; which flows from nature too, but requires more to be assisted by experience, and formed by art. This is that superiour talent of ministers of state, which is so rarely found in those of other countries, and which abounds

abounds so happily at present in those of Great Britain. It is by this, that they discover the most secret dispositions of other courts; and, discovering those dispositions, prevent their designs, or never suffer themselves to be surprised by them. It is by this, that they watch over the publick tranquillity at home; foresee what effect every event that happens, and much more every step they make themselves, will have on the sentiments and passions of mankind. This part of human wisdom is therefore every where of use; but is of indispensable necessity in free countries, where a greater regard is to be constantly had to the various fluctuations of parties; to the temper, humour, opinion and prejudices of the people. Without such a regard as this, those combinations of peculiar circumstances, which we commonly call conjunctures, can never be improved to the best advantage, by acting in conformity, and in proportion to them; and without improving such conjunctures to the best advantage, it is impossible to achieve any great undertaking, or even to conduct affairs successfully in their ordinary course.

A want of this just discernment of spirits, if I am not extremely mistaken, defeated the designs of those who prosecuted with so much vigour the popish plot, and the exclusion of the duke of York. Several of them were men of very great abilities; and yet we shall have no reason to be surprised that they failed in this point, if we reflect how unfit even the greatest genius is to

discern the spirit of others, when he hath once overheated his own. All men are fallible: but here lies the difference. Some men, such as I have just mentioned, crossed by difficulties, pressed by exigencies, transported by their own passions, or by the passions of those who fight under their banner, may now and then deviate into errour, and into errour of long and fatal consqeuence. But there are some men, such as I shall not mention upon this occasion, (because I reserve them for another and a better) who never deviate into the road of good sense; who, crossed by no difficulties, pressed by no exigencies, meeting scarce opposition enough to excite their industry, and guiding a tame well-tutored flock, that follow their bell-weather obstinately, but never tread on his heels: there are men, I say, whose special privilege it is to proceed with all these advantages deliberately and superciliously, from blunder to blunder, from year to year, in one perpetual maze of confused, incoherent, inconsistent, unmeaning schemes of business.

But having nothing to do with the men of this character at present, I return to those of the former class; to the men who led the whig party, at it's first appearance in the time of king Charles the second. The foundation upon which they built all their hopes of success was this; that they should frighten and force the king into a compliance with them: but they did not enough consider, that the methods they took were equally proper to frighten and force a great part of the nation

nation from them, by reason of the particular circumstances of that time. They did not enough consider, that when they began to put their designs in execution, scarce twenty years had passed from the restoration; and that the highest principles, in favour of the church and the monarchy, had prevailed almost universally during one half of that time, and very generally during the other half; that they had the accidental passions of the people for them, but the settled habits of thinking against them; that they were going off from a broad to a narrow bottom; from the nation to a part of the nation; and this at a time, when they wanted a more than ordinary concurrence of the whole body. They did not enough consider, that they were changing the very nature of their party, and giving an opportunity to the court, which was then become, in the strict sense of the word, a faction, to grow up into a party again, and such a party as would divide, at least, the people with them, upon principles, plausible in those days, and sufficient to raise a spirit capable to disappoint all their endeavours.

The same resentments and prejudices, the same jealousies and fears, which burst out with violence upon many occasions a few years before, lay still in the hearts of men; latent and quiet, indeed, and wearing out by degrees, but yet easy to be revived, and to be blown up anew. If we compare the conduct of the long parliament in 1674 and 1675, with the attempts which had been lately made, during the administration of the cabal; with the

secret of the second Dutch war, and many other designs and practices of the court, which were then come lately and very authentically to light; with the state of Scotland, which was then subdued under a real tyranny, and with that of Ireland, where, to say no more, the act of settlement was but ill observed; if we make this comparison, it will not yet appear, that the proceedings of the house of commons were immoderate, though they were warm; nor factious, though they were vigorous; nor that any danger could be then reasonably apprehended from them, except to the enemies of the constitution in church and state; and yet even then the old resentments, prejudices, jealousies, and fears began to revive; and an apprehension of falling back under the influence of presbyterians and republican principles began to show itself in the house of lords, and in the nation. It is true, that this had no immediate consequence; because the popish plot broke out soon afterward like a mighty flame, in which these little fires, that began to burn anew, were lost. This great event made the church and the dissenters continue to run into one, as they had begun to do before; and the sole division of parties was that of the court and the country, as long as this parliament lasted. But still it was evident with how delicate a hand every thing, that related to our former disputes, required to be touched. It was evident that the least alarm given to the church, or to those who valued themselves on the principles of loyalty then in fashion, would be sufficient to open those wounds

which

which were just skimmed over, and to raise two new parties out of the ashes of the old

These parties were not raised, while the long parliament sate; because a general opinion prevailed, and well enough founded on their precedent conduct, that however angry the king might be with the parliament, or the parliament with the king, a few popular steps made on one side, and a little money granted on the other, would soften matters between them, and dispose them to forget all former quarrels. As hot therefore as the parliament grew, and as much as some people might think that they exceeded their bounds; yet still it was difficult to persuade even these people, that a parliament like this would push things to the last extremity; destroy the constitution they had settled and supported with so much zeal; or draw the sword against a prince, to whom they had borne so much affection. But in the parliaments which followed, the case was not the same; and I will state as shortly as I can, upon authorities, which no man likely to contradict me must refuse, what made the difference. These authorities shall be that of Burnet, and that of Rapin; whom I quote, on this occasion, for the same reason that I would quote my lord Clarendon against king Charles the first, or Ludlow for him.

In the year 1676, before we have grounds sufficient to affirm, that the design of * excluding the duke of York was formed, but not before we have reason to suspect, that it might be in the thoughts

* Burnet's History of his own times, vol. i, p. 393.

of

of several, those who stood foremost in the opposition to the court were very industrious to procure a dissolution of the long parliament; so industrious, that they * negotiated the affair with the duke, who had concurred in a vote for an address to dissolve it; and they undertook † that a new parliament should be more inclinable to grant the papists a toleration, than they would ever find this would prove. The papists were in earnest for this measure; since Coleman drew a declaration for justifying it, and since their design in it was to divide the king ‡ and his people. It is fair to conclude that the protestants, who had been in it at the time I mention upon party views, were at least as much so, when their views rose higher. This parliament had pushed a strict and thorough examination into the popish plot, with great sincerity and zeal. Nay, the project of the exclusion had been started, though not prosecuted, in the last session. May we not take it for granted however, that they, who were now resolved to carry the exclusion, in a manner in which they soon attempted to carry it, and who foresaw by consequence the difficulties that would be opposed to them, and the strong measures they should be obliged to pursue, in order to overcome these difficulties; I say, might not they think this parliament much less proper than any other to engage and persist in such measures? They thought thus, without doubt; and so far they judged better than

* Burnet's History of his own times, vol. i, p. 393.

† Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

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the king, who came into the dissolution upon very different motives. But as to the consequence of engaging a new parliament in such strong measures, the event showed, that the king judged better than they, in the progress of this affair.

The dissenters, who had been long persecuted by the parliament, and bantered and abused by the court, were encouraged by the conjuncture to lift up their heads. They took advantage of the horrour and indignation, which the discovery of the popish plot, and the use made of this discovery, had raised all over the kingdom. They could not be more zealous in this cause than the members of the established church had shown themselves to be; but they cried, perhaps, louder for it. In short, whatever their management was, or however they were abetted, certain it is that they were very active, and very successful too, in the elections of the parliament which followed the long parliament, according to Rapin, who asserts that many of the members, chosen into this house of commons, were presbyterians. He might have said as much, upon just as good grounds, of the two parliaments which followed this; and I shall speak of them indiscriminately. The leaders, who mustered all their forces, in order to push the bill of exclusion, looked on this turn in the elections as an advantage to them; and it might not have been a disadvantage, if they and the dissenters had improved it with more moderation. But they were far from doing so, as Rapin himself seems to own a little unwillingly, when he says, that complaisance for

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the presbyterians was carried, perhaps, too far in the bill for the comprehension of protestant dissenters. Bishop Burnet speaks more plainly. He owns that many began to declare openly in favour of the nonconformists; that upon this the nonconformists behaved themselves very indecently; that they fell severely on the body of the clergy; and that they made the bishops and clergy apprehend, that a rebellion, and with it the pulling the church to pieces, was designed. Several other passages of the same strength, and to the same purpose, might be collected from this historian; and he, who reads them, will not be surprised, I think, to find that such proceedings as these, both in parliament and out of it, gave an alarm to the clergy, and set them to make parallels between the late and the present times; and to infuse the fears and the passions, which agitated them, into the nation. The bishop accuses them, indeed, of doing this with much indecency. But they, who are frightened out of their wits, will be apt to be indecent; and indecency begets indecency.

At the same time that the jealousies of a design to destroy the church prevailed, others prevailed likewise of a design to alter the government of the state; of a design not only against the successor, but against the possessor of the crown. Many well-meaning men, says bishop Burnet upon one occasion, began to dislike these practices, and to apprehend that a change of government was designed. ——— The king came to think himself,

says

says the same author upon another occasion, levelled at chiefly, though for decency's sake his brother was only named. Rapin goes farther; for, speaking of the same time, he uses this remarkable expression; that "Things seemed to be taking "the same course as in the year 1640; and there "was reason to think, that the opposing party "had no better intentions towards the king now "than the enemies of king Charles the first had to-"wards him." But whatever some particular men, who knew themselves irreconcilable with the king, as well as the duke, or some others, who had still about them a tang of religious enthusiasm and republican whimsies, might intend; I am far from thinking the party, who promoted the exclusion, meant to destroy, on the contrary it is plain that they meant to preserve, by that very measure, the constitution in church and state. The reason why I quote these passages, and refer to others of the same kind, is not to show what was really designed, but what was apprehended; for as the distinction of whig and tory subsisted long after the real differences were extinguished, so were these parties at first divided, not so much by overt acts committed, as by the apprehensions, which each of them entertained of the intentions of the other. When the resolution was once taken of rejecting all limitations, on the belief artfully, and, I think, knavishly propagated, that the king would yield, if the parliament persisted; the necessary consequences of the king's adhering inflexibly to his brother were those which followed, those "fulmina par-

parliamentaria," harsh votes, angry proceedings, addresses, that were in truth remonstrances, projects of associations, pretensions to a power of dispensing with the execution of laws, (that very prerogative they had so justly refused to the crown) and many others which I omit. All these would have been blasts of wind, " bruta fulmina," no more, if the king had yielded: and that they were pushed in this confidence by the bulk of the party who pushed them, cannot be doubted: since it cannot be doubted that the bulk of the party depended on the king's yielding almost, perhaps, even to the last. Some few might be willing, nay desirous, that he should not yield, and hope to bring things into a state of confusion; which none but madmen, or those, whom their crimes or their fortunes render desperate, can ever wish to see. But it would be hard, indeed, if parties were to be characterized, not by their common view, or the general tenour of their conduct, but by the private views imputed to some among them, or by the particular sallies, into which mistake, surprise, or passion, hath sometimes betrayed the best-intentioned, and even the best-conducted bodies of men. Whig and tory were now formed into parties; but I think they were not now, nor at any other time, what they believed one another, nor what they have been represented by their enemies, nay by their friends. The whigs were not roundheads, though the measures they pursued, being stronger than the temper of the nation would then

then bear, gave occasion to the suspicions I have mentioned. The tories were not cavaliers, though they took the alarm so sudden and so warm for the church and the king; and though they carried the principles in favour of the king, at least, while the heat of their contests with the opposite party lasted, higher than they had been ever carried before. The whigs were not dissenters, nor republicans, though they favoured the former, and though some inconsiderable remains of the latter might find shelter in their party. The tories had no disposition to become slaves, or papists, though they abetted the exercise of an exorbitant power by the crown, and though they supported the pretensions of a popish successor to it.—Thus I think about the parties, which arose in the reign of king Charles the second; and as I deliver my thoughts with frankness, I hope they will be received with candour. Some farther and stronger reasons for receiving them so may perhaps appear in a subsequent letter.

I am, SIR,

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

If king Charles the second could have been prevailed upon to sacrifice the chimerical divine right of his brother to the real interest, and right too, of his people; that happy event would have made him ample amends in future ease and quiet, and the nation in future security, for all precedent disorders, dangers, and fears of danger. But instead of this, he was every day confirmed in the resolution of not giving up, directly and in terms, that right of his brother, which he thought reflected strength on his own. The very measures taken to force him to submit, enabled him to resist. The opposite spirit spent itself in blood and violence. The spirit of him rose visibly in the nation; and he saw very soon the time approach, when he might venture to appeal to his people against his parliament. This time was come, when men were once convinced that a country party prevailed no longer, but that faction had taken it's place. Many appearances, which I have not room to enumerate, served to propagate this opinion; particularly the behaviour and almost avowed pretensions of the duke of Monmouth; which were carried on even in defiance of the solemn declaration made by the king, that he had never married the duke's mother.

Some of the worthiest and warmest men, who were engaged for the exclusion, complained themselves,

selves, even from the first, of the private interests and factious intrigues which prevailed among them. "I must confess," says a very considerable man*, who laid down his life for this cause afterward, and whose original letter is still extant; "I must confess, I do not know three men of a "mind; and that a spirit of giddiness reigns "among us, far beyond any I have ever observed "in my life." And yet he had lived and acted in as factious a time as this nation ever saw. He proceeds. "Some look who is fittest to succeed.— "They are for the most part divided between the "prince of Orange, and the duke of Monmouth. "The first hath plainly the most plausible title. "—I need not tell you the reasons against Mon- "mouth.—The strongest for him are, that who- "ever is opposed to York will have a good party; "and all Scotland, which is every day like to be "in arms, doth certainly favour him, and may "probably be of as much importance in the "troubles that are now likely to fall upon us, "as they were in the beginning of the last. "Others are only upon negatives, &c."

I could easily multiply proofs of this kind; but I think I need not take any pains to show, that there was such a faction formed at this time; nor to refute Welwood, who asserts that the duke of Monmouth was not ambitious to the degree of aspiring to the crown, till after his landing in the west. I will only remark, that the efforts of this faction among those who drove on the bill of

* Algernon Sidney.

exclusion, furnished another motive to the division and animosity of parties. The tories, who had divided from the others, on jealousies of designs to change the constitution in church and state, began now to apprehend that the opposite party might succeed in another view, and set up a king of their own nomination. A notion then entertained by many, that the worse title a man had, the better king he was likely to make, did not persuade them. They had suffered under the tyranny of a party; many of them had been themselves the abettors of a party administration; and they feared with reason a party king. Thus personal interests were mingled on both sides with publick considerations; and the duke of York gained a great number of adherents, not by affection to him, but by an aversion to Monmouth; which increased among the tories, in proportion as the duke's popularity increased among the whigs; not by any favourable disposition in the tories to popery and arbitrary power; but by a dread, as I have observed already, of returning in the least degree under the influence of those principles, and the power of those men, whose yoke had galled the necks of many that were still alive and active on the stage of publick affairs. "Men grew "jealous of the design" (says bishop Burnet, speaking of Monmouth's popularity) "and fan-"cied here was a new civil war to be raised. "Upon this, they joined with the duke's party;" meaning the duke of York's.

I say nothing of the apprehensions entertained

on one side, and the expectations entertained on the other from Scotland; because though there was, even in the beginning of these struggles, a concert between those who were oppressed by the court there, and those who opposed it here, which grew afterward into a closer correspondence, and became riper for action; yet the seditious spirit, that gave occasion to these apprehensions and expectations, was rouzed and exasperated by the inhumanity of the duke of Lauderdale; who, though a presbyterian himself, was the butcher of that party; pushed the warmest of them into unjustifiable excesses; revived their silly zeal for the covenant: and wrought up their enthusiasm even to assassination and rebellion. Let me only observe, that this was plainly the fault of the court, and could not therefore be imputed to the whigs, whatever use some of that party might propose to make of such a disposition. The violence of the conventiclers was sounded high, in order to palliate the severities exercised in the government of that kingdom. But the reasonable men of all parties thought then, as they think now, and always will think, that it is the duty of those who govern, to discern the spirit of the people; to consider even their passions; to have a regard to their weaknesses; and to show indulgence to their prejudices; and that ministers, who punish what they might prevent, are more culpable than those who offend.

As the two parties were formed, so was their division maintained by mutual jealousies and fears;

which are often sufficient to nourish themselves, when they have once taken root in the mind; and which were, at this time, watered and cultivated with all the factious industry possible. The most improbable reports, the most idle surmises, carried about in whispers, were sufficient, as I might easily show in various instances, to raise a panick terrour in one party, or the other. In both, there were but too many persons on the watch, to improve and to propagate these terrours, and by a frequent repetition of such impressions to raise the alarm and hatred of parties to the highest pitch. He, who went about to allay this extravagant ferment, was called a trimmer; and he who was in truth a common friend, was sure of being treated like a common enemy. Some, who voted for the bill of exclusion, were very far from being heartily for it; but I have seen good reasons to believe, and such there are even in our publick relations, that some of those who voted against it, and declared for limitations, concurred in the end, though they differed in the means, with those who promoted the bill. And yet such men were constantly marked out as favourers of popery and enemies to their country. Thus in the other party, men, who had no other view but that of securing their religion and liberty, and who meant nothing more than to force the court into such compliances as they judged necessary to establish this security, were stigmatized with the opprobrious names of fanatick and republican. Thus it happened in those days, and thus it happens

pens in ours; when any man who declares against a certain person, against whom the voice of the nation hath already declared, or complains of things which are so notorious, that no man in the nation can deny them, is sure to be followed by the cry of jacobitism or republicanism. But there is a great difference, God be praised, between the two cases. The present cry, being void of pretence, is therefore without effect. It is heard in few places, and believed only in one.—But to return.

When the nation was divided in this manner, the heat of the parties increased as their contest lasted, according to the usual course of things. New engagements were daily taken; new provocations and offences were daily given. Publick disputes begot private pique; and private pique supported publick disputes with greater rancour and obstinacy. The opposite principles advanced by the two parties were carried higher and higher, as they grew more inflamed; and the measures they pursued, in order to get the better each of his adversary, without overmuch regard to any other consequence, became stronger and stronger, and perhaps equally dangerous. The meeting of the parliament at Oxford had a kind of hostile appearance; and as soon as parliaments were laid aside, which happened on the sudden and indecent dissolution of this, the appearance grew worse. No security having been obtained by parliamentary methods, against the dangers of a popish succession, it is probable that they, who looked on these dangers as nearest and greatest, began to cast

about how they might secure themselves and their country against them by methods of another kind; such as extreme necessity, and nothing but extreme necessity can authorize. Such methods were happily pursued and attended with glorious success, a few years afterward, when this succession had taken place; and, by taking place, had justified all that had been said against it, or foreboded of it; when the nation was ripe for resistance, and the prince of Orange ready and able, from a multitude of fortunate, concurring circumstances, to support so great an enterprise. But the attempts, which were wise at one time, would have been desperate at the other; and the measures which produced a revolution in the reign of king James, would have produced in the reign of king Charles, a civil war of uncertain event at best: I say of uncertain event at best; because it seems to me, that whoever revolves in his thoughts the state of England and Scotland, as well as the situation of our neighbours on the continent, at that time, must be of opinion, that if the quarrel about the exclusion had broke out into a war, the best cause would have been the worst supported. The king, more united than ever with his brother, would have prevailed. What was projected in 1670, and perhaps more than was then intended, would have been effected; and the religion and liberty of Great Britain would have been destroyed by consequence. We cannot say, and it would be presumption to pretend to guess, how far the heads of party had gone, in Scotland, or in England, into

measures

measures for employing force. Perhaps, little more had passed, in which they who became the principal sacrifices were any way concerned, than rash discourse about dangerous, but rude indigested schemes, started by men of wild imaginations, or desperate fortunes, and rather hearkened to than assented to; nay, possibly despised and neglected by them. But the court, who wanted a plot to confirm and increase their party, and to turn the popular tide in their favour, took the first opportunity of having one; which was soon furnished to them by the imprudent, but honest zeal of some, and by the villainy, as well as madness of others: and they prosecuted it so severely, with the help of forward sheriffs, willing juries, bold witnesses, and mercenary judges*, that it answered all their ends. The design of assassinating the king and the duke, was certainly confined to a few desperate villains; but too many had heard it from them, who were both so foolish and so wicked, as not to discover them†; and this reflected great prejudice, though I doubt not in many cases very unjustly, against all those who had acted upon better principles, but yet were involved in these prosecutions.

As this event disarmed, dispirited, and broke one party; so it strengthened, animated, and united the other. The tories, who looked on the dangers they apprehended from the whigs to be greater and nearer than those, which they had apprehended, as well as the whigs, before this new division of parties, from a popish succession, were

*Burnet. † Ibid.

now confirmed in their prejudices. Under this persuasion, they run headlong into all the measures which were taken for enlarging the king's authority, and securing the crown to the duke of York. The principles of divine hereditary right, of passive obedience, and nonresistance, were revived and propagated with greater zeal than ever. Not only the wild whimsies of enthusiasts, of schoolmen and philosophers, but the plainest dictates of reason were solemnly condemned in favour of them, by learned and reverend bodies of men; who little thought that in five years time, that is in 1688, they should act conformably to some of the very propositions, which at this time they declared false, seditious, and impious.

In short, the Guelphs and Gibellines were not more animated against each other at any time, than the tories and whigs at this; and in such a national temper, considerable steps were made, as they well might be, towards the destruction of our constitution. One of those which Rapin enumerates, and insists upon very gravely, can scarce be mentioned without smiling. "The king," says he, "in order to make his people feel the slavery "he had newly imposed on them, affected to re-"view his troops; and these troops amounted, by "the return of the garrison of Tangier, to four "thousand men, effective, and well-armed." The whigs, indeed, in those days, were so averse to standing armies, that they thought even those troops, commonly called guards, unlawful; and bishop Burnet argues, in his reflections on my

lord Russell's trial, that a design to seize on them amounted to no more than a design to seize on a part of the king's army. But it is possible that the tories, who had showed their dislike of standing armies sufficiently in the long parliament, might think it however no unreasonable thing, when designs of insurrections, and even of assassinations, had come so lately to light, that a number of regular troops, sufficient to defend the person of the king, but not sufficient to oppress the liberties of the people, and five times less than we have since seen kept up in the midst of the most secure tranquillity, should be winked at, till these distempers were intirely over.

Another step, which the same author mentions, was indeed of the greatest consequence, and laid the axe to the root of all our liberties at once, by giving the crown such an influence over the elections of members to serve in parliament, as could not fail to destroy that independency, by which alone the freedom of our government hath been, and can be supported. I mean the proceedings by quo warranto, and the other methods taken to force, or persuade, the corporations to surrender their old charters, and accept new ones, under such limitations and conditions, as the king thought fit to innovate. These proceedings were violent, the judgments upon them arbitrary, and the other methods employed scandalous. But still it was the end, it was the consequence, that alarmed and terrified all those who had not sold themselves to the court, or who had not lost, in their zeal for party,

party, all regard to their country, much more than the means that were employed upon this occasion. If, instead of garbling corporations by prerogative, the court could have purchased their elections by money, we may reasonably believe that the surer and more silent way would have been taken. But would the alarm have been less among all the friends of liberty? Certainly not. They would have seen that the end was the same, and have disliked these means the more, for being less liable to observation and clamour. A prince, asserting an illegal and dangerous prerogative, and applauded for doing so, and seconded in the attempt by a numerous party in the nation, carried no doubt a very terrible aspect. But still there was room to hope, the violent character of the duke of York considered, (and that hope was actually entertained by many) that the party, who abetted these usurpations of the prerogative, might be soon frightened back again from a court to a country interest; in which case, there was room to hope likewise, the milder character and better understanding of the king considered, that the evil might be in some degree redressed, and the consequences of it prevented. It was reasonable for the friends of liberty to expect that men, who were injured, would complain and seek relief, on the first favourable opportunity. But if they had been corrupted, and the practice of selling elections had been once established, I imagine that the friends of liberty would have thought the case more desperate.——It is certainly an easier task,

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and there is somewhat less provoking, as well as less dangerous in it, to struggle even with a great prince who stands on prerogative, than with a weak, but profligate minister, if he hath the means of corruption in his power, and if the luxury and prostitution of the age have enabled him to bring it into fashion. Nothing surely could provoke men, who had the spirit of liberty in their souls, more than to figure to themselves one of these saucy creatures of fortune, whom she raises in the extravagance of her caprice, dispatching his emissaries, ecclesiastical and secular, like so many evil dæmons, to the north and to the south, to buy the votes of the people with the money of the people, and to choose a representative body, not of the people, but of the enemy of the people, of himself.

This was not the case at the time we are speaking of. It was prerogative, not money, which had like to have destroyed our liberties then. Government was not then carried on by undertakers, to whom so much power was farmed out for returns of so much money, and so much money intrusted for returns of so much power. But though the case was not so desperate, yet it was bad enough in all conscience; and among all the excesses into which the tories ran, in favour of the crown, and in hopes of fixing dominion in their own party, their zeal to support the methods of garbling corporations was, in my opinion, that which threatened publick liberty the most. It hath been reproached to them by many; but if among those who reproached them, there should be

be some who have shared since that time in the more dangerous practice of corrupting corporations, such men must have fronts of brass, and deserve all the indignation which is due to iniquity, aggravated by impudence. The others abetted, in favour of a prerogative, supposed real by many in those days, and under the pretence at least of law, a power, which gave the crown too much influence in the elections of members of the house of commons; but these men, if there are any such, have been concerned in a practice, for the sake of their own vile interest, which spreads like a gangrene over the whole body of a nation, and to every branch of government; and which hath never failed, in any one instance, where it hath been suffered, to become the bane of liberty.

We have now carried the two parties through that period of time, when the conduct of both was most liable to the objections made to them by their adversaries.—The tories acted on the most abject principles of submission to the king; and, on those of hereditary right, were zealous for the succession of a prince, whose bigotry rendered him unfit to rule a protestant and a free people.—The whigs maintained the power of parliament to limit the succession to the crown, and avowed the principle of resistance; in which they had law, example, and reason for them. But then the fury of faction was for doing that without parliament, which could only be legally done by it: and, in order to this, the principles of resistance were extended too far; and the hottest men of the party

party taking the lead, they acted in an extravagant spirit of licence, rather than a sober spirit of liberty; and the madness of a few, little inferior to that of Cromwell's enthusiasts, dishonoured the whole cause for a time.—My intention was not to have left them here; but to have carried these observations on so far as to justify, notwithstanding these appearances, what is said at the conclusion of my last letter, concerning the true characters of both parties. But either the abundance of matter hath deceived me, or I have wanted skill and time to abridge it; so that I must defer this part of my task, and crave your indulgence, as well as that of your readers, for my prolixity.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

I ADVANCED, in the first of these essays, something to this effect; that every clumsy, busy, bungling child of fortune, on whom she bestows the means and the opportunity of corrupting, may govern by this infamous expedient; and, having gratified his ambition and avarice, may have a chance to secure himself from punishment, by destroying the liberties of his country. It was advanced likewise, in the same paper, that every character is not equally fit to govern a people by dividing them; because some cunning, some experience, nay, some skill to form, and some

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address to conduct a system of fraud, are necessary in this case. I persuade myself that no man, who read that paper, was at a loss to find an instance to confirm the truth of the first of these propositions; and we have now before us another, which may serve to confirm the truth of the second.

Though I do not think the designs of king Charles the second either deeply laid, or deeply fixed in his own mind; yet in general they were founded on bad principles, and directed to bad ends. He desired indeed to be easy, and to make his people so; but then he desired both these on such conditions, as were inconsistent with good government, during the whole course of his reign, and with the security of religion and liberty, during the latter part of it. We have seen how the intemperate conduct of many, and the flagitious designs of some among the whigs, weakened their own party, and gave new strength and new provocations to the other. But we have not yet considered some other advantages, without which these divisions could neither have been fomented, nor supported as they were. Now these advantages arose chiefly from the character and conduct of the king himself. If king Charles had found the nation plunged in corruption; the people choosing their representatives for money, without any other regard; and these representatives of the people, as well as the nobility, reduced by luxury to beg the unhallowed alms of a court; or to receive, like miserable hirelings, the wages of iniquity from a minister:

minister: if he had found the nation, I say, in this condition, (which extravagant supposition one cannot make without horrour) he might have dishonoured her abroad, and impoverished and oppressed her at home, though he had been the weakest prince on earth, and his ministers the most odious and contemptible men that ever presumed to be ambitious. Our fathers might have fallen into circumstances, which compose the very quintessence of political misery. They might have sold their birthright for porridge, which was their own. They might have been bubbled by the foolish, bullied by the fearful, and insulted by those whom they despised. They would have deserved to be slaves, and they might have been treated as such. When a free people crouch, like camels, to be loaded, the next at hand, no matter who, mounts them, and they soon feel the whip and the spur of their tyrant; for a tyrant, whether prince or minister, resembles the devil in many respects, particularly in this. He is often both the tempter and tormentor. He makes the criminal, and he punishes the crime.

But this was not the state of the English nation, at the time we speak of. We were not yet corrupted, nor even quite ripe for corruption. Parties there were; and the contests of these parties gave occasion to the rise and growth of factions; some of which ran into the most seditious practices against the government, and others into the vilest submission to it. But still a spirit of liberty remained in many, uncorrupted and

and unextinguished, and such as worked our national deliverance in the days of distress, that soon followed. We were freemen then, in the proper sense and full extent of the words; because not only the laws, which asserted our common rights, were maintained and improved, but private independency, which can alone support publick liberty under such a government as ours, was itself supported by some of that ancient œconomy and simplicity of manners, that were growing, but not grown, out of fashion. Such a people, as we then were, could neither be bought nor driven; and I think king Charles could not have divided and led them, if he had wanted any of the qualities he possessed, or had held another conduct than he held. Far from being proud, haughty, or brutal, "he had not a grain of pride, or vanity, "in his whole composition *;" but was the most affable, best-bred man alive. He treated his subjects like noblemen, like gentlemen, like freemen, not like vassals, or boors. Whatever notion he had of his hereditary right, he owned his obligation for the crown he wore to his people, as much as he would have been bound to do, in reason, in justice, in honour, and in prudence, if he had stood at the greatest distance from it, in the course of lineal succession, and had been called to it from the low state in which he was before, by the free gift and choice of the nation. His professions were plausible, and his whole behaviour engaging; so that he won upon the hearts, even while

* Sir William Temple.

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he lost the good opinion of his subjects; and, often balanced their judgment of things, by their personal inclination. These qualities and this part of his conduct went a great way to give him credit with his people, and a hold on their affections. But this was not all. He observed their temper, and he complied with it. He yielded to them in points, from which he had determined, and declared too, that he would never depart. To know when to yield in government, is at least as necessary, as to know when to lose in trade; and he who cannot do the first, is so little likely to govern a kingdom well, that it is more than probable he would govern a shop ill. King Charles gave up to the murmurs of his people, not one or two such ministers as may be found almost behind every desk; those aukward pageants of courts, those wooden images, which princes gild and then worship; but several great and able men, nay, whole cabals of such, who had merit with him, though they had none with the nation. He started often out of the true interest of his people, but the voice of his people almost as often reclaimed him. He made the first Dutch war, but he made the triple alliance too. He engaged with France in the war of 1672, but he made a separate peace with Holland. True it is, indeed, that neither the representations of his parliament, nor the desires of his people, could prevail on him to go farther, and to enter in earnest into the war against France. But the confidence between him and his parliament was so broken at that time,

that they would not trust him, nor he them. At this I am not surprised, and for that very reason I confess, I have always been so at the strong and repeated instances made to force him into that war; since it cannot surely be better policy to drive a prince into a war, which he has no inclination to make, than it would be to be drawn by him into a war, if he had no ability to conduct it. In home affairs, beside his frequent concessions, whenever the nation took umbrage at his proceedings, he passed the test and the habeas corpus bills, and many others for the publick benefit: and I scarce remember any popular act, which stopped at the throne in his time, except that about the militia, which he apprehended to be a dangerous encroachment on his prerogative, and another in favour of the dissenters, which was contrived, meanly enough, to be stolen off the table in the house of lords.

What has been touched here and in former papers will be sufficient to show, in some measure, how king Charles was enabled to divide a nation so united and so heated as this nation was, on the discovery of the popish plot; to oppose so avowedly and so resolutely the exclusion of his brother: the prospect of whose succeeding to the crown was become still more dreadful, even by that small part of Coleman's correspondence, which had come to light; and yet to attach so numerous a party to himself, nay to his brother; to lay aside parliaments for several years, and not only to stand his ground, but to gain ground in

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the nation, at the same time. But there is still something more to be added. He had not only prepared for the storm, but he acquired new strength in the midst of it; that is, in the proceedings on the popish plot, and the bill of exclusion. He would gladly have kept the former out of parliament; but when it was once there, he put on the appearances of great zeal for the prosecution of it. These appearances helped him to screen his brother; as the ill success of the exclusion-bill in the house of lords, where it was rejected by sixty-three against thirty, helped to screen himself from the violence of the house of commons. But that which gave him the principal advantage, in the present contests, was another management. As soon as the first preparatory steps were made to the bill of exclusion in 1678, he declared himself, in a speech to his parliament, ready to pass any bills to make his people safe in the reign of his successor, so they tended not to impeach the right of succession, nor the descent of the crown in the true line. He persisted in his declaration to the last; and if he had done nothing else, I imagine that he would have gained no great popularity. When a free people lie under any grievance, or apprehend any danger, and try to obtain their prince's consent to deliver them from one, or prevent the other, a flat refusal, on his part, reduces them to the melancholy alternative of continuing to submit to one, and to stand exposed to the other, or of freeing themselves from both, without his consent; which can hardly be done by means very consistent with his and their common interest. King Charles

was too wise to push the nation to such an extremity. He refused what his parliament pressed on him in the manner and on the principle they pressed it; but then his refusal was followed by expedients which varied the manner, and yet might have been managed so as to produce the effect; and which seemed to save, rather than actually saved, the principle. Numbers concurred, at that time, in avowing the principle; and the tests had made many persons think religion safe; as the king's offers made them think it no fault of his, if it was not made safer. The council had prepared some expedients; and the limitations, and other provisions against a popish successor, proposed directly from the throne by the chancellor in 1679, went a great way towards binding the hands of such a successor, and lodging the power, taken from him, in the parliament. But the scheme of expedients, debated in the Oxford parliament, was a real exclusion from every thing, but the title of a king. The first article banished the duke of York, during his life, to the distance of five hundred miles from England, Scotland, and Ireland; and the tenth, to mention no more, excluded him ipso facto, if he came into any of these kingdoms; directed that he should suffer, in this case, as by the former bill, and that the sovereignty should vest forthwith in the regent; that is, in the princess of Orange. Surely this was not to vote the lion in the lobby into the house. It would have been to vote him out of the house and lobby both, and only suffer him to be called lion still. I am not ignorant of the refinements urged by Sir William Jones

Jones and others against this scheme: but I know that men run into errours from both extremes; from that of seeing too much, as well as that of seeing too little; and that the most subtle refiners are apt to miss the true point of political wisdom, which consists in distinguishing justly between what is absolutely best in speculation, and what is the best of things practicable in particular conjunctures. The scheme, no doubt, was built on a manifest absurdity, and was liable to many inconveniencies, difficulties and dangers; but still it was the utmost that could be hoped for at that moment: and the single consideration, one would think, should have been this; whether, united under such an act of parliament, they would not have opposed the succession of the duke of York, with less inconveniency, less difficulty and danger, than disunited, and with the laws against them. The truth is, that as there were men at this time desirous that the king should be on desperate terms with his parliament, because they were so themselves; in like manner there were others, who desired, for a reason of the same nature, that the parliament should be on desperate terms with the king. These were factious interests, and they prevailed against the national interest, which required that the king should be separated at any rate from his brother, instead of being united to him by a fear made common to both. But the dye was thrown; and the leaders of the whig party were resolved "to let all lie in confusion, rather than hearken to any thing, beside the exclusion*."

* Burnet's Hist.

Obstinacy provoked obstinacy. The king grew obstinate, and severe too, against his natural easiness and former clemency of temper. The tory party grew as obstinate, and as furious on their side, according to a natural tendency in the disposition of all parties: and thus the nation was delivered over, on the death of king Charles, "à la sottise de son frère*;" to the folly and madness of his brother.

It was this folly and madness however, that cured the folly and madness of party. As the common danger approached, the impressions of terrour, which it made, increased. Whig and tory then felt them alike, and were brought by them, as drunken men sometimes are, to their senses. The events of king James's reign, and the steps by which the revolution was brought about, are so recent, and so well known, that I shall not descend into any particular mention of them. A few general remarks on the behaviour of this prince, and on the behaviour of parties in his reign, and at the revolution, will be sufficient to wind up the history of whig and tory, and to prove what I have so often asserted, that both sides purged themselves, on this great occasion, of the imputations laid to their charge by their adversaries; that the proper and real distinction of the two parties expired at this æra, and that although their ghosts have continued to haunt and divide us so many years afterward, yet there neither is, nor can be any division of parties at this time, reconcilable with common

* An expression used by king Charles on many occasions.

sense

sense and common honesty, among those who are come on the stage of the world under the present constitution, except those of churchmen and dissenters, those of court and country.

The behaviour and conduct of king James the second would be sufficient, if there was no other instance, and there are thousands, to show that as strong prejudices, however got, are the parents, so a weak understanding is the nurse of bigotry, and injustice, and violence, and cruelty it's offspring. This prince was above fifty, when he came to the throne. He had great experience of all kinds; particularly of the temper of this nation, and of the impossibility to attempt introducing popery, without hazarding his crown. But his experience profited him not. His bigotry drew false conclusions from it. He flattered himself that he should be able to play parties against one another, better than his brother had done; (which, by the way, was the least of his little talents;) and to complete his designs by an authority, which was but too well established. He passed, I think, for a sincere man. Perhaps, he was so; and he spoke always with great emphasis of the word of a king: and yet never was the meanest word so scandalously broken as his. In the debate in 1678, about the test, when he got a proviso put in for excepting himself, it has been advanced in print, and not denied that I know of, that speaking with "great "earnestness, and with tears in his eyes, he solemn- "ly protested, that whatever his religion might be, it "should only be a private thing between God and

" his own soul; and that no effect of it should ever " appear in the government *." At his accession to the throne, in council first, and after that in full parliament, in the face of the nation, he made the strongest declaration in favour of the constitution in church and state, and took the most solemn engagements to defend and support it. But bigotry burst through all these cobwebs; for such they are to men, transported by a religious delirium, who acquire a strength that those, who are well, have not, and conscientiously break all the obligations of morality. These admirable dispositions in the king were encouraged by the state in which his brother left and he found the nation, and by the complaisance of the parliament which he called soon after his accession. They were confirmed, and he was determined to pull off the mask entirely, by the ill success of the duke of Monmouth and the earl of Argyle. Bishop Burnet speaks of this parliament very indecently, and I think very untruly. They were neither men of parts, nor estates, according to him. The truth is, that the circumstances under which we were brought by the factious proceedings of both parties, in the late reign, for and against the court, were such as might perplex the best parts, and puzzle the heads even of the wisest men. A professed, zealous papist, in full and quiet possession of the throne, and, instead of any provision made, or any measures taken against him, the notion and the exercise of the prerogative established at an extravagant

* Burnet's History.

height,

height, were such circumstances, as laid the nation almost at the mercy of the king. They therefore, who were the most determined not to part with either their religion, or their liberty, and yet had more to lose in the fray than Dr. Burnet, might be willing to look round them, to wait opportunities, and not undertake rashly what can seldom be undertaken twice. It is impossible to believe, that their confidence in the king's word was such as they affected. But, like drowning men, who saw nothing else to catch at, they caught at a straw. The duke of Monmouth's expedition into England, and the earl of Argyle's into Scotland, were so far from affording the nation any opportunity of ending their condition, that the declaration of the former might draw some of the dissenters to his standard, as it did; but was calculated to drive the tory party, most of the whigs, and in short the bulk of the people from him. The declaration of the latter was founded in the solemn league and covenant; and gave so much reason to apprehend that a revival of the same principles, and a renewal of the same tyranny was intended, that we cannot wonder it had no better an effect; though we lament the fate of a worthy and gallant man, whose crime was refusing a test, that should never have been imposed on protestants and freemen, and who had been driven into these extreme resolutions by a series of unjust and tyrannical usage.

Thus were these invasions, in the very beginning of his reign, favourable in some respects to the designs of king James. They fortified, in the minds

minds of men, the jealousies and fears, which had a few years before formed the tory party, and disposed them by consequence, at least, to keep measures and not break with the king. They gave him the pretence, which he seized very readily, of raising and keeping up a standing army. But, in the event, they forwarded our deliverance from all the dangers to which we were exposed under his government, by precipitating his attempts against our religion and liberty. The same day that the news of the invasion in Scotland was communicated to the parliament here, the commons voted that great revenue, which they gave him, and gave him for life. After these invasions were over, they voted a supply, which was intended for the charge of maintaining the additional forces. They offered to pass a law for indemnifying his popish officers from the penalty they had incurred, and to capacitate such others as he should name in a list to be given to the house. In short, they suffered themsleves to be drawn to the brink of the precipice; but there they stopped. They would neither give him the whole supply of one million two hundred thousand pounds, which he asked, nor sanctify, by the authority of parliament, the practice of keeping up a standing army in time of peace; but rejected the words moved for that purpose. They would neither repeal the test and penal laws, nor submit to his dispensing, or suspending, which was in effect a repealing power: that is, they would not cast themselves headlong down the precipice. And because they

they would not, he quarrelled with them, lost the seven hundred thousand pounds they had voted, rather than suffer them to sit any longer; and never met them more.

Things hastened now to a decision. The king's designs were openly avowed, and desperately pushed. The church of England opposed them with the utmost vigour. The dissenters were cajoled by the court; and they, who had been ready to take arms against king Charles, because he was unwilling to exclude his brother, and who had taken arms against this prince, since he was on the throne, became abettors of his usurpations. It were easy to prove this, even by bishop Burnet's account, as much as that is softened; and if the excuses which have been made for their silence against popery in this critical moment, or for their approving and encouraging the exercise of a dispensing power, are to be received, one may undertake to excuse, on the same principles of reasoning, all those instances of misconduct in the church party, which I have presumed to censure so freely. But the truth is, these excuses are frivolous. I could quote some that are even burlesque. Let us reverence truth therefore, and condemn the dissenters as frankly, on this occasion, as we have condemned the members of the church of England on others.

The revolution soon followed. Many of the most distinguished tories, some of those who carried highest the doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance, were engaged in it, and the whole nation

nation was ripe for it. The whigs were zealous in the same cause; but their zeal was not such as, I think, it had been some years before, a zeal without knowledge. I mean, that it was better tempered, and more prudently conducted. Though the king was not the better for his experience, parties were. Both saw their errours. The tories stopped short in the pursuit of a bad principle. The whigs reformed the abuse of a good one. Both had sacrificed their country to their party. Both sacrificed, on this occasion, their party to their country. When the tories and the whigs were thus coalited, the latter stood no longer in need of any adventitious help. If they did not refuse the assistance of those, who had weakened their cause more by the jealousies and fears to which they gave both occasion and pretence, than they had strengthened it by their number, yet they suffered them to have no influence in their councils, no direction of their conduct. The cause of liberty was no longer made the cause of a party, by being set on such a bottom, and pushed in such a manner, as one party alone approved. The revolution was plainly designed to restore and secure our government, ecclesiastical and civil, on true foundations; and whatever might happen to the king, there was no room to suspect any change in the constitution. There were some, indeed, concerned in this great and glorious undertaking, who had obstinately preserved, or lightly taken up the republican and other whimsies, that reigned in the days of usurpation and confusion.

fusion. If they could have prevailed, and it was no fault of theirs they did not, the coalition of parties had been broken; and, instead of a revolution, we might have had a civil war, perhaps not even that sad chance for our religion and liberty. But this leaven was so near worn out, that it could neither corrupt, nor seem any longer to corrupt the mass of the whig party. The party never had been presbyterians, nor republicans, any more than they had been quakers; any more than the tory party had been papists, when, notwithstanding their aversion to popery, they were undeniably under the accidental influence of popish councils. But even the appearances were now rectified. The revolution was a fire, which purged off the dross of both parties; and the dross being purged off, they appeared to be the same metal, and answered the same standard.

I shall deliver my thoughts, on some other occasion, concerning the disputes that arose about the settlement of the crown after the revolution; and show, if I do not very much deceive myself, that no argument can be drawn from thence against any thing I have advanced.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

THE slavish principles of passive obedience and nonresistance, which had sculked perhaps in some old homily before king James the first, but were talked, written, and preached into vogue in that inglorious reign, and in those of his three successors, were renounced at the revolution by the last of the several parties who declared for them. Not only the laity, but the clergy embraced and co-operated in the deliverance which the prince of Orange brought them. Some of our prelates joined to invite him over. Their brethren refused to sign an abhorrence of this invitation. The university of Oxford offered him their plate, and associated for him against their king. In one word, the conduct of the tories, at this crisis, was such as might have inclined a man to think they had never held resistance unlawful, but had only differed with the whigs about the degree of oppression, or of danger, which it was necessary to wait, in order to sanctify resistance. Now, it may appear at first a little strange that these principles, which had always gone hand in hand with those of the divine, hereditary, indefeasible right of kings, that were just as well founded in reason, in support of which the example of the primitive christians might be pompously cited, and to countenance which some text of the Bible might be piously

piously strained, should not keep their hold, and maintain their influence, as well as the others.

This attachment to hereditary right will appear the more strange, if we consider what regard was shown, at this time, to the difficulties they who had pawned themselves, as it were, for the principles, would be under, when they came to concur in establishing a settlement repugnant to it. That great and solemn resolution, about the abdication of king James, and the vacancy of the throne, might have been expressed in terms much stronger and plainer than it was. I have heard there were persons who had a mind it should be so, and who, more attached to the honour, that is, the humour of party, than to the national interest, in this great event, would have turned this resolution, as well as the declaration of the prince of Orange, to a more express approbation of the whig, and a more express condemnation of the tory tenets and conduct. But a wiser and honester consideration prevailed. Instead of erecting the new government on the narrow foundations of party systems, the foundations of it were laid as wide, and made as comprehensible as they could be. No man, I believe, at this time thinks that the vote asserted too little; and surely there was no colour of reason, on the side of those who cavilled against it at that time, for asserting too much.

The disputes about the words abdicate, or desert, and about the vacancy of the throne, were indeed fitter for a school than a house of parliament,

ment, and might have been expected in some assembly of pedants, where young students exercised themselves in disputation, but not in such an august assembly as that of the lords and commons, met in solemn conference upon the most important occasion. The truth is, that they who formed the opposition were reduced to maintain strange paradoxes; stranger in my opinion, than most of those which cast so much ridicule on the stoics of old. Thus, for instance, they were forced to admit that an oppressed people might seek their remedy in resistance, for they had sought it there themselves; and yet they opposed making use of the only remedy, which could effectually secure them against returns of the same oppression, when resistance had put it in their power, as oppression had given them a right to use this remedy. Surely this must appear a paradox, and a very absurd one too, if we consider that resistance, in all such cases, is the mean, and future security the end; and that the former is impertinent, nay, wicked in the highest degree, if it be not employed to obtain the latter. Thus again, the same men declared themselves willing to secure the nation against the return of king James to that throne which he had abdicated, or, according to them, deserted: nay, some of them were ready, if we may credit the anecdotes of that time, to proceed to such extreme resolutions, as would have been more effectual than justifiable in the eyes of mankind; and yet they could not prevail on their scrupulous consciences to declare the throne vacant. They had

had concurred in the vote, that it was "inconsis-
"tent with the laws, liberties and religion of Eng-
"land to have a papist rule over the kingdom."
King James had followed the pious example of Sigismond, who, not content to lose the crown of Sweden himself for his religion, had carried his son away, that he might be bred a papist, and lose it too; and yet they maintained, though they did not expressly name him, that if the throne was then, or should be at any time vacant of the father, it must be reputed instantaneously full of the son, upon the foundation of this silly axiom, that the king never dies. According to this law, and these politicks, king James and his successors, to the twentieth generation, might have continued abroad, a race of royal exiles, preserving their indefeasible right to govern, but debarred from the exercise of it; while the nation continued, during all this time, from century to century, under the dominion of regents, with regal authority, but without any regal right; an excellent expedient sure to keep the monarchy in an hereditary succesison! But there remained none better, on the principles of these men, since the prince of Orange had committed the fatal oversight of neglecting to conquer the nation. His sword would have cut the gordian knot of hereditary right, and they could have submitted with safe consciences to a conqueror. But to give the crown to a prince, though they had put the whole administration into his hands; which, by the way, was high treason, unless the throne was, what they denied

it to be, actually vacant: to give the crown, I say, to a prince who would not take it, when it was in his power to take it, without their consent; to settle a new government by agreement and compact, when the glorious opportunity of establishing it by force and conquest had been unhappily lost: these were propositions to which they could not consent. King James had violated the fundamental laws, which he had promised over and over, and sworn to maintain. He had shown by his first escape, when nothing more was imposed on him than to wait the resolution of a free parliament, that he would renounce his crown rather than submit to secure effectually the observation of these laws. He had made a second escape, which was voluntary as well as the first, and made on the same principle, against the intreaties of his friends, and the instigations of the same council that had directed his former conduct, and on a letter from the queen, claiming his promise to do so. Notwithstanding all these reasons, they who maintained the hereditary right of our kings, reduced themselves, and would have reduced their country, to the absurd necessity of altering their constitution, under pretence of preserving it. No king, except a Stuart, was to reign over us: but we might establish a doge, a lord archon, a regent; and thus these warm asserters of monarchy, refusing to be slaves, contended to be republicans. Many more paradoxes of equal extravagance might be cited, which were advanced directly, or which resulted plainly from

the arguments employed on one side of the question in those disputes; but the instances I have cited may suffice for our present purpose, and may serve to show, that although difficulties hard to solve in speculation, or to remove in practice, will arise in the pursuit of the most rational principles, yet such absurdities as these can never arise, except from the most irrational, and always must arise from such.

If the persons who maintained this divine, hereditary, indefeasible right of our kings, had thought fit to drop these principles, when they laid aside those of passive obedience and nonresistance, and no tolerable reason can be given why they did not, their conduct would have been consistent and uniform on this great occasion; and this consistency and uniformity would have been productive of great good, by taking away at once even the appearances of all political division in the bulk of the nation. But while they laboured to reconcile their present conduct to their ancient system, they were true to neither. They had gone much farther than this would allow, and then they refused to go as far as the other required, in order to be safe, and therefore in order to be justified. They lost every kind of merit, the chimerical merit of adhering to a set of silly principles, the real merit of sacrificing their prejudices to the complete deliverance of their country from the recent danger of popery and arbitrary power. Nay, they did worse; for the mischievous consequences of their conduct were not hurtful to

them alone, and at that time alone, but to the publick, and even down to these times. They furnished pretence to factions, who kept up a division under the old names, when the differences were really extinguished by the conduct of both parties, because the conduct of both parties were no longer conformable to the principles imputed to them. The tories had no longer any pretence of fearing the designs of the whigs, since the whigs had sufficiently purged themselves from all suspicion of republican views, by their zeal to continue monarchical government, and of latitudinarian schemes in point of religion, by their ready concurrence in preserving our ecclesiastical establishment, and by their insisting on nothing farther, in favour of the dissenters, than that indulgence which the church was most willing to grant. The whigs had as little pretence of fearing the tories, since the tories had purged themselves, in the most signal manner, from all suspicion of favouring popery or arbitrary power, by the vigorous resistance they made to both. They had engaged, they had taken the lead in the revolution, and they were fully determined against the return of king James. The real essences of whig and tory were thus destroyed, but the nominal were preserved, and have done since that time a good part of the mischief which the real did before. The opposition made to the settlement of the crown brought this about. An overcurious inquiry into the motives of this opposition would be a task too invidious for me to undertake. Something however

ever may be said upon it. We may say in general, without offence, that private ambition mingled itself early in the great and national concerns of the revolution; and that it did so more, as the prospect of a new settlement, and of the elevation of the prince of Orange approached. Expectations were raised, disappointments were given or foreseen, and a variety of motives of the same kind began to influence very strongly the conduct of the principal actors. Some endeavoured to lay the foundations of their future fortune by demonstrations of a personal attachment to the prince, which were carried on, I doubt, a little too independently of the regard due to their country, in some cases; particularly, if I mistake not, in that of the declaration of rights, of which we may pronounce, and experience will justify us, that it was too loose, too imperfect, and nothing less than proportionable to the importance of the occasion, and the favourable circumstances of the conjuncture. Others there were, who imagined that the shortest and surest way for them to take, in pursuit of the same view, was to make themselves considerable by opposition, to form a party, and maintain a struggle for personal power, under the pretence and umbrage of principle. This was, without doubt, the motive of some particular leading men, and could not be, at least at first, the motive of numbers. But there was another motive, which easily became that of numbers, because it arose out of a fund common to all men, the perversity of human nature, according to an

observation made in one of these letters. While the event of the prince of Orange's expedition was undecided, men remained under the full influence of their fears, which had determined them to act against their prejudices. But when the revolution was secure, and these fears were calmed, these prejudices resumed in some degree their former power, and the more for being revived and encouraged by men of reputation and authority, who argued for some, and might as reasonably have argued for all the errours, in contradiction to which most of them had acted, nay, and were ready to act. With such views, and by such means, were many brought, at this time, to entangle themselves in a maze of inextricable absurdities. Had they owned candidly and fairly that their principles, as well as those of the whigs, were carried too high in the former disputes of parties, and that these principles could not be true, since they found themselves actually in a situation, wherein it was not possible to act agreeably to them, without manifest absurdity, the distinction, as well as the difference of whig and tory had been at an end. But contrary measures produced a contrary effect. They kept up the appearances, and they could keep up no more, of a whig and a tory party, and with these appearances a great part of the old animosity. The two names were sounded about the nation, and men who saw the same ensigns flying, were not wise enough to perceive, or not honest enough to own, that the same cause was no longer concerned, but listed themselves on either side,

side, as their prejudices at first, and their inclinations, or other motives, which arose in the progress of their contests, directed them afterward: whigs very often under the tory standard, tories very often under the whig standard.

This general representation, which I have made of the state of parties at the revolution, is, I am verily persuaded, exactly just; and it might be supported by many particular proofs, which I choose rather to suggest than to mention. But if any doubt remains, let us analyse the several parties of that time a little more, reduce them to their first and real principles, and then pronounce whether we find the whig or the tory party subsisting among them.

In the first place, there was a party that concurred in making the new settlement; a party that prevailed in parliament, and was by much the majority of the nation out of it. Were the whigs this majority? was this party a whig party? No man will presume to affirm so notorious an untruth. The whigs were far from being this majority, and king James must have died on the throne, if the tories had not concurred to place the prince of Orange there in his stead. Was this party a tory party then? Certainly no. The whigs had been zealous in the same cause, and had contributed to make it successful by their temper, as well as their zeal, by waiting the time of the tories, or rather the maturity of the conjuncture, and by moderating their principles and their conduct in favour of that coalition, without which the revolution could have

succeeded no more than the exclusion did. We find then here neither a whig nor a tory party; for in coalitions of this kind, where two parties are melted as it were into one, neither of them can be said, with truth and propriety, to exist.

There was another party directly opposite to this; a certain number of men, on whom the original taint transmitted down from king James the first, remained still in the full strength of it's malignity. These men adhered to those principles, in the natural sense and full extent of them, which the tories had professed. But yet, the tories having renounced these principles, or distinguished themselves out of any obligation to observe them, this inconsiderable faction could not be deemed the tory party, but received the name of jacobite with more propriety.

Two other parties there were at this time, formed on one common principle, but widely different however, by the different consequences they drew from it. The principle I mean, is that contained in the distinction of a king de jure, and a king de facto. The famous statute of Henry the seventh authorised this distinction. The statute was designed principally, no doubt, for the advantage of the subjects, that they might be safe, whichever side prevailed, in an age when the epidemical folly of fighting for different pretenders had spilt oceans of blood on the scaffold, as well as in the field; and yet the statute was designed for the service of kings de facto too, and particularly of Henry the seventh. The author of "Hereditary Right asserted"* would have

*1713. Author was Rev. Geo. Harbin, a non-juror, al- Hilkiah Bedford was fined 1000 marks for writing lishing it. Allihone, tit. Bedford.

have us believe otherwise; and yet surely nothing can be more evident than this, that if king Henry the seventh's right had been as unquestionable as he supposes, and I presume to deny that it was, yet he would have been declared a king de facto only, if the intrigues of the duchess of Burgundy and the faction of York had succeeded; and consequently this provision for the safety of his adherents, in that possible contingency, gave strength to him, as it would have given strength to any other prince, while it attached his adherents to him by the apparent security it provided; for this author contends, that it did not establish a real security, and advises us to suspend our judgment on the validity of this statute, till we see what the "opinion of par-
"liament or the judges may be, whenever a king
"de jure shall dispossess a king de facto." He refers us ad Calendas Græcas.

But there are two observations to be made to our present purpose on this statute, which seem to me natural and plain. First, it confounds in effect the very distinction it seems to make; since it secures alike, and, by securing alike, authorises alike those who adhere to the king de jure, and those who adhere to the king de facto, provided they adhere to the king in possession. Secondly, It was contrived to hinder people, according to my lord Bacon's sense of it, "from busying them-
"selves in prying into the king's title, and that
"subjects might not trouble themselves with in-
"quiries into the justness of the king's title or
"quarrel." Now, upon the foundation of this distinction

LETTER IX.

SIR,

BUT whatever the state of parties was at the revolution, and for some time afterward, the settlement made at that time having continued, that state of parties hath changed gradually, though slowly, and hath received at length, according to the necessary course of things, a total alteration. This alteration would have been sooner wrought, if the attempt I have mentioned, to defend principles no longer defensible, had not furnished the occasion and pretence to keep up the appearances of a tory and a whig party. Some of those who had been called tories furnished this pretence. They who had been called whigs seized and improved it. The advantages to one side, the disadvantages to the other, the mischiefs to the whole, which have ensued, I need not deduce. It shall suffice to observe, that these appearances were the more easy to be kept up, because several men, who had stood conspicuous in opposition to one another before the revolution, continued an opposition, though not the same, afterward. Fresh provocations were daily given, and fresh pretences for division daily taken. These contests were present; they recalled those that had past in the time of king Charles the second, and both sides forgot that union which their common danger and their common interest had formed at the

the revolution. Old reproaches were renewed, new ones invented, against the party called whigs, when they were as complaisant to a court as ever the tories had been; against the party called tories, when they were as jealous of publick liberty and as frugal of publick money as ever the whigs had been. Danger to the church, on one side, and danger to the state, on the other, were apprehended from men who meant no harm to either; for though dissenters mingled themselves on one side, and jacobites on the other, and notwithstanding the leanings of parties in favour of those, by whom they were abetted, yet is it a certain truth, that the struggle was in the main for power, not principle; and that there was no formal design laid on one side to destroy the church, nor on the other the state. The cavils which may be made, and the facts which may be cited, some of older and some of fresher date, against what hath been here said, do not escape me. Men of knowledge, and of cool and candid thought, will answer one, and account for the other, without my help; and I cannot resolve, for the sake of the passionate, nor even of the ignorant, to descend upon this subject into a greater detail.

I pass to that which is closer to my present purpose, and of more immediate use; and I say, that as the natural dispositions of men are altered and formed into different moral characters by education, so the spirit of a constitution of government, which is confirmed, improved and strengthened by the course of events, and especially by

those of fruitless opposition, in a long tract of time, will have a proportionable influence on the reasoning, the sentiments, and the conduct of those who are subject to it. A different spirit and contrary prejudices may prevail for a time, but the spirit and principles of the constitution will prevail at last. If one be unnatural, and the other absurd, and that is the case in many governments, a vigorous exercise of power, signal rewards, signal punishments, and a variety of other secondary means, which in such constitutions are never wanting, will however maintain, as long as they are employed, both the spirit and the principles. But if the spirit and principles of a constitution be agreeable to nature and the true ends of government, which is the case of the present constitution of the British government, they want no such means to make them prevail. They not only flourish without them, but they would fade and die away with them. As liberty is nourished and supported by such a spirit and such principles, so they are propagated by liberty. Truth and reason are often able to get the better of authority in particular minds; but truth and reason, with authority on their side, will carry numbers, bear down prejudices, and become the very genius of a people. The progress they make is always sure, but sometimes not observable by every eye. Contrary prejudices may seem to maintain themselves in vigour, and these prejudices may be kept up long by passion and artifice. But when truth and reason continue to act without restraint, a

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little sooner or a little later, and often when this turn is least expected, the prejudices vanish at once, and truth and reason triumph without any rival.

The constitution of England had been seen in two very different lights for almost a century before the revolution; so that there is no room to be surprised at the great opposition that appeared, when the whig and tory parties arose a very few years before that æra, between principles which, as opposite as they were, each side pretended to establish on the nature of one and the same constitution. How this happened hath been often hinted, and I have not here room to explain any farther. Let us be satisfied that it is no longer the case. Our constitution is no longer a mystery; the power of the crown is now exactly limited, the chimæra of prerogative removed, and the rights of the subject are no longer problematical, though some things necessary to the more effectual security of them may be still wanting. Under this constitution, the greatest part of the men now alive were born. They lie under no pretence of obligation to any other, and to the support of this they are bound by all the ties of society, and all the motives of interest.

Let us prove what we advance; and that we may do so ad homines, let us borrow our argument from the great champion of hereditary right.* Having mentioned in his introduction what he endeavours pompously, but vainly, to establish in his book in favour of hereditary right, "a

"prescription,

* p. 136. note

" prescription of nine centuries, a continual claim " of five hundred and fifty years," he attempts to convince us by a " novel law, and a modern " constitution." This modern constitution is the act of recognition, in the first of king James the first. The declarations there made in favour of hereditary right are no doubt as strong as words can frame, and the words are such as would tempt one to think, by the fustain they compose, that his majesty himself had penned them. From hence it is concluded, that since " the vows and acts of " fathers—bind their posterity—This act, till the " society hath revoked it lawfully, lays the same " obligation on every member of the society, as " if he had personally consented to it."—If this act then was lawfully revoked, or repealed, another novel law, contrary to it, might be made equally binding; but neither this act, nor the act of the twelfth of Charles the second, affirming the crown to appertain by just and undoubted right to the king, his heirs and lawful successors, having been expressly repealed, we still lie under the same obligations, and every settlement, contrary to them, and by consequence the settlement made at the revolution, is unlawful. Now I ask, was not the will of Henry the eighth, which excluded the whole Scottish line, made in pursuance, and by the authority of an act passed in the twenty-fifth year of his reign? Hath not this author justified the validity of this will much to his own satisfaction, and, I believe, to that of his readers? Was this will lawfully revoked? Was this statute expressly repealed?

repealed? I ask farther, whether hereditary right, and the obligations of subjects to it, could be made immutable and eternal, as this author asserts that they were by the act of recognition, without a manifest contradiction to the act of queen Elizabeth, which declares the power of parliament to limit and bind the succession to the crown? Was this act expressly repealed? That King James the first succeeded lawfully against law, our author is fond to maintain, and the proposition is not unlike that of some popish casuists, who assert that his holiness "jure potest contra jus "decernere, can decree rightfully against right." But if these questions are fairly answered, it will result from such answers, and from the arguments I have quoted, that this novel law, this modern constitution, is a mere illusion; that it never bound any member of the society; and that the parliament had as much right to make the settlement in 1688, notwithstanding the act of recognition, as the parliament had to make this act in 1603, notwithstanding the two acts I have mentioned, and the will of Henry the eighth, made by virtue of the first of them. This wayward and forlorn hereditary right must therefore fall to the ground, or be supported by the supposed prescription of nine centuries, and claim of five and a half, which no intelligent man who reads this book will be persuaded that the author hath proved a jot better, than the uninterrupted succession of popes, from St. Peter down to his present holiness, is proved by the learned antiquaries of Italy. If this act of

recognition be urged, as it sometimes is, to show the declared sense of the three estates of the kingdom, which declaration was obtained, it seems in a hurry, since the act was read three times in one house on the same day; the declared sense of the three estates, not pronounced in a hurry, but after the most solemn debates and conferences, may be urged with much greater weight, in favour of our present settlement. If this act of recognition notwithstanding what hath been objected, be urged as a law which had the assent of a king, in opposition to the proceedings of the convention, by which king William and queen Mary were raised to the throne, the answer is obvious and conclusive. The circumstances of the two cases are very different, but when they come to be weighed in a fair balance, those which attended the settlement of the crown on the revolution, will be found at least as conformable to reason, to law, and to practice, as those which attended the establishment of the Stuart family. Queen Elizabeth designed king James the first to be her successor; the nation concurred to make him so; neither she nor they paid any regard to the law which stood in his way. Their reasons for acting in this manner are easy to be discovered in the history of that time, and on the same authority we may certainly conclude, that they would not have acted in this manner, if king James had been, like his mother, a professed papist. Thus he got into the throne, and when he was there, he got, like other kings, such a title as he chose to stand upon,

upon, agnized, or recognized by his parliament. The settlement at the revolution was made by a convention of the lords spiritual and temporal, and a full and free representative of the whole body of the people. When king William and queen Mary were once settled in the throne, this settlement was continued and confirmed by an assemblage of all the legislative powers. He who will dispute the validity of these proceedings must show therefore first of all, what hath never yet been shown, no, not by the author I have so often quoted, the invalidity of the proceedings of those parliaments, which raised Edward the third and Henry the fourth to the throne, which were called as irregularly, though by writs in the names of Edward the second and Richard the second, as it can be pretended that the convention was. He must show the invalidity of the proceedings even of that assembly, by which Charles the second was called home, till their proceedings became valid by a subsequent confirmation. He must show farther, how any of the laws of the princes of the house of Lancaster came to be constantly received and executed, a little better than the author of "Hereditary right asserted" hath done, by assuring us on his word, that it was by the "sufferance of Edward the fourth and his succes-"sors, and the approbation of the people." He must account for the continuance in force of the laws of Richard the third, and of Henry the seventh, a little better than the same author does by the deficiency of Henry the seventh's title, which upon another occasion he magnifies, though

upon this he affirms it to have been no better than that of Richard the third, and by the great respect of Henry the eighth for his father. When this hath been once shown, it will be time to think of a reply. In the meanwhile we will observe, that beside the passion and party spirit which possess almost all those who write on this subject, there is a distinction which should be constantly made in cases of this nature, and which they never make, or never make exactly enough. They compare the proceedings without comparing the situation. Necessity and self-preservation are the great laws of nature, and may well dispense with the strict observation of the common forms of any particular constitution. Either the convention must have fallen into the absurdities I have already mentioned, or have called back king James, which would have been still a greater absurdity, or have left their country in absolute anarchy, or have done what they did. What they did, was done as near as possible to the spirit of our constitution, the forms of our laws, and the examples of former times. They had the merit, their posterity hath the benefit, nay, he who would say that they had the guilt, not the merit, must still allow that their posterity hath the benefit, without sharing the guilt; and, upon the whole matter, I will venture to assert, that he who scruples, or pretends to scruple, at this time, the validity of our present constitution, is no wiser, or else no honester, than he would be, who should scruple, or pretend to scruple, the validity of Magna Charta. I have often wished,

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that some profound antiquary of much leisure would write an elaborate treatise, to assert royal prerogative against the great charter, as well as hereditary right against the revolution. I am persuaded that he would succeed alike in both. Why, indeed, should a charter, extorted by force, and therefore vicious in it's principle, stand on a better foot, or have more regard paid to it, than a settlement made in opposition to a divine, and therefore indefeasible right? I say, and therefore indefeasible; because if it be not proved to be something more than human, it will hardly be proved indefeasible. But I quit this subject; upon which, perhaps, you may think I have spent my time as ill, as I should have done if I had preached against the Koran at Paul's. It is time to speak of the motives of interest, by which we are bound, as well as by the ties of duty, to support the present constitution.

Upon this head a few words will be sufficient, since I presume that no prejudices can be strong enough to create much diversity of opinion in a case so very clear, and capable of being stated so shortly. Whether the revolution altered our old constitution for the better, or renewed it, and brought it back to the first principles, and nearer to the primitive institution, shall not be disputed here. I think the latter, and every man must think that one or the other was necessary, who considers, in the first place, how the majesty and authority of the prince began to swell above any pitch, proportionable to the rank of chief

magistrate, or supreme head, in a free state; by how many arts the prerogative of the crown had been stretched, and how many precedents, little favourable to liberty, had been set, even before the accession of the Scottish line; and who considers, in the next place, the direct tendency, confirmed by experience, of those principles of government, so frequently mentioned, which composed an avowed system of tyranny, and established slavery as a political, a moral, and a religious obligation, which king James the first was too successful in establishing, but neither he nor his descendants were able to pursue. What these considerations made necessary was done at the revolution, at least, so far as to put it into our power to do the rest. A spirit of liberty, transmitted down from our Saxon ancestors, and the unknown ages of our government, preserved itself through one almost continual struggle, against the usurpations of our princes, and the vices of our people; and they, whom neither the Plantagenets nor the Tudors could enslave, were incapable of suffering their rights and privileges to be ravished from them by the Stuarts. They bore with the last king of this unhappy race, till it was shameful, as it must have been fatal, to bear any longer; and while they asserted their liberties, they refuted and anticipated, by their temper and their patience, all the objections which foreign and domestick abettors of tyranny are apt to make against the conduct of our nation towards their kings. Let us justify this conduct

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by persisting in it, and continue to ourselves the peculiar honour of maintaining the freedom of our Gothic institution of government, when so many other nations, who enjoyed the same, have lost theirs.

If a divine, indefeasible, hereditary right to govern a community be once acknowledged, a right independent of the community, and which vests in every successive prince immediately on the death of his predecessor, and previously to any engagement taken on his part toward the people; if the people once acknowledge themselves bound to such princes by the ties of passive obedience and nonresistance, by an allegiance unconditional, and not reciprocal to protection; if a kind of oral law, or mysterious cabbala, which pharisees of the black gown and the long robe are always at hand to report and interpret as a prince desires, be once added, like a supplemental code, to the known laws of the land: then, I say, such princes have the power, if not the right, given them, of commencing tyrants; and princes who have the power, are prone to think that they have the right. Such was the state of king and people before the revolution. By the revolution, and the settlement since made, this state hath received considerable alterations. A king of Britain is now, strictly and properly, what kings should always be, a member, but the supreme member, or the head of a political body: part of one individual, specifick whole, in every respect; distinct from it, or independent of it in none:

none: he can move no longer in another orbit from his people, and, like some superiour planet, attract, repel, influence, and direct their motions by his own. He and they are parts of the same system, intimately joined and cooperating together, acting and acted upon, limiting and limited, controlling and controlled by one another; and when he ceases to stand in this relation to them, he ceases to stand in any. The settlements, by virtue of which he governs, are plainly original contracts. His institution is plainly conditional, and he may forfeit his right to allegiance, as undeniably and effectually, as the subject may forfeit his right to protection. There are no longer any hidden reserves of authority, to be let out on occasion, and to overflow the rights and privileges of the people. The laws of the land are known, and they are the sole springs, from whence the prince can derive his pretensions, and the people theirs. It would be to no purpose to illustrate any farther a matter which begins to be so well understood; or to descend into a more particular enumeration of the advantages that result, or may result, from our present settlement. No man, who does not prefer slavery to liberty, or a more precarious security to a better, will declare for such a government, as our national divisions, and a long course, seldom interrupted, of improvident complaisance to the crown, had enabled king James the second to establish against such a government as was intended by the subsequent settlement: and if there

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be any such man, I declare that I neither write to him nor for him.

I may assume therefore, without fearing to be accused of begging the question, that the constitution under which we now live is preferable to that which prevailed at any time before the revolution. We are arrived, after many struggles, after a deliverance almost miraculous, and such a one as no nation hath reason to expect twice, and after having made some honest improvements on the advantages of our new constitution, very near to that full security, under which men who are free, and solicitous to continue so, may sit down, not without watchfulness, for that is never to be suffered to relax under such a government as ours, but without anxiety. The sum therefore of all these discourses, and of all our exhortations to one another, is, and ought to be, that we should not stop short in so important a work. It was begun at the revolution; but he who thinks it was perfected then, or hath been perfected since, will find himself very much mistaken. The foundations were laid then. We proceeded for some time after that, like the Jews in rebuilding their temple; we carried on the holy work with one hand, and held our swords in the other to defend it. That distraction, that danger is over, and we betray the cause of liberty without any colour of excuse, if we do not complete the glorious building, which will last to ages yet remote, if it be once finished, and will moulder

moulder away and fall into ruins, if it remain longer in this imperfect state.

Now that we may see the better how to proceed in the cause of liberty, to complete the freedom, and to secure the duration of our present constitution, it will be of use, I think, to consider what obstacles lie, or may hereafter lie, in our way, and of what nature that opposition is, or may hereafter be, which we may expect to meet. In order to this, let us once more analyse our political divisions; those which may possibly exist now, or hereafter, as we did those which were formed at the revolution.

One possible division then is that of men angry with the government, and yet resolved to maintain the constitution. This may be the case at any time; under the present wise, virtuous, and triumphant administration, and therefore to be sure at any other.

A second possible division is that of men averse to the government, because they are so to the constitution, which I think can never be the case of many; or averse to the constitution, because they are so to the government, which I think may be the case of more. Both of these tend to the same point. One would subvert the government, that they might change the constitution. The other would sacrifice the constitution, that they might subvert the government.

A third possible division, and I seek no more, is that of men attached to the government; or, to speak more properly, to the persons of those who govern;

govern; or, to speak more properly still, to the power, profit, or protection they acquire by the favour of these persons, but enemies to the constitution.

Now, as to the first and second of these possible divisions, if there be any such among us, I do not apprehend that we are at present, or can be hereafter in much danger, or that the cause of liberty can meet with much opposition from them; though the second have certainly views more likely to bring slavery upon us, than to promote liberty; and though prudence requires that we should be on our guard against both. The first, indeed, might hope to unite even the bulk of the nation to them, in a weak and oppressive reign. If grievances should grow intolerable under some prince as yet unborn; if redress should become absolutely desperate; if liberty itself should be in imminent peril; the nature of our constitution would justify the resistance, that we ought to believe well enough of posterity to persuade ourselves would be made in such an exigency. But without such an exigency, particular men would flatter themselves extremely, if they hoped to make the nation angry because they were so. Private motives can never influence numbers. When a nation revolts, the injury is national. This case therefore is remote, improbable, nay, impossible, under the lenity, justice, and heroical spirit of the present government; and if I mentioned such an imaginary party, it was only done that I might omit none which can be supposed. The projects of the second division, stated in the

same

same hypothetical manner, are surely too extravagant, and their designs too wicked to be dangerous. Disputes may arise hereafter, in some distant time, about ministers, perhaps about kings; but I persuade myself that this constitution will be, as it ought to be always, distinguished from, and preferred to both, by the British nation. Reasons must arise in process of time, from the very nature of man, to oppose ministers and kings too; but none can arise, in the nature of things, to oppose such a constitution as ours. Better ministers, better kings, may be hereafter often wanted, and sometimes found, but a better constituted government never can. Should there be therefore still any such men as we here suppose, among us, they cannot expect, if they are in their senses, a national concurrence: and surely a little reflection will serve to show them, that the same reasons which make them weaker now than they were some years ago, must make them weaker some years hence than they are now.

As to the third division, if any such there be, it is in that our greatest and almost our whole danger centres. The others cannot overthrow, but these may undermine our liberty. Capable of being admitted into power in all courts, and more likely than other men to be so in every court except the present, whose approved penetration and spotless innocence give a certain exclusion to them, they may prevent any farther securities from being procured to liberty, till those already established are dissolved or perverted. Since then our principal danger must in all times arise from those

those who belong to this division, it is necessary to show, before we conclude these discourses, by what means such men may carry on their pernicious designs with effect, and by what means they may be defeated. These considerations will lead us to fix that point, wherein men of all denominations ought to unite, and do unite, and to state the sole distinction of parties, which can be made with truth at this time among us.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER X.

SIR,

It may be asked, perhaps, how men who are friends to a government, can be enemies at the same time to the constitution upon which that government is founded. But the answer will be easy, if we consider these two things: first, the true distinction, so often confounded in writing, and almost always in conversation, between constitution and government. By constitution we mean, whenever we speak with propriety and exactness, that assemblage of laws, institutions, and customs, derived from certain fixed principles of reason, directed to certain fixed objects of publick good, that compose the general system, according to which the community hath agreed to be governed. By government we mean, whenever we speak in the same manner, that particular

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tenour of conduct which a chief magistrate, and inferiour magistrates under his direction and influence, hold in the administration of publick affairs. We call this a good government, when the execution of the laws, the observation of the institutions and customs, in short, the whole administration of publick affairs, is wisely pursued, and with a strict conformity to the principles and objects of the constitution. We call it a bad government, when it is administered on other principles, and directed to other objects, either wickedly or weakly, either by obtaining new laws, which want this conformity, or by perverting old ones which had it; and when this is done without law, or in open violation of the laws, we term it a tyrannical government. In a word, and to bring this home to our own case, constitution is the rule by which our princes ought to govern at all times; government is that by which they actually do govern at any particular time. One may remain immutable; the other may, and as human nature is constituted, must vary. One is the criterion by which we are to try the other; for surely we have a right to do so, since if we are to live in subjection to the government of our kings, our kings are to govern in subjection to the constitution; and the conformity or nonconformity of their government to it prescribes the measure of our submission to them, according to the principles of the revolution, and of our present settlement; in both of which, though some remote regard was had to blood, yet the preservation of the constitution manifestly determined

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the community to the choice then made of the persons who should govern. Another thing to be considered is this: when persons are spoken of as friends to the government, and enemies to the constitution, the term friendship is a little prostituted, in compliance with common usage. Such men are really incapable of friendship; for real friendship can never exist among those who have banished virtue and truth. They have no affection to any but themselves; no regard to any interest except their own. Their sole attachments are such as I mentioned in the last letter, attachments to power and profit, and when they have contracted a load of infamy and guilt in the pursuit of these, an attachment to that protection, which is sufficient to procure them appearances of consideration, and real impunity. They may bear the semblance of affection to their prince, and of zeal for his government; but they who are false to the cause of their country will not be true to any other; and the very same minister, who exalts his master's throne on the ruins of the constitution, that he may govern without control, or retire without danger, would do the reverse of this, if any turn of affairs enabled him to compound, in that manner, the better for himself.

Under a prince therefore tolerably honest, or tolerably wise, such men as these will have no great sway; at least, they will not hold it long. Such a prince will know, that to unite himself to them, is to disunite himself from his people; and that he makes a stupid bargain, if he prefers trick to policy, expedient to system, and a cabal

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to the nation. Reason and experience will teach him, that a prince who does so must govern weakly, ignominiously, and precariously; while he, who engages all the hearts, and employs all the heads and hands of his people, governs with strength, with splendour, and with safety, and is sure of rising to a degree of absolute power, by maintaining liberty, which the most successful tyrant could never reach by imposing slavery. But how few men (and princes, by their leaves, are men) have been found in times past, or can be hoped for in times to come, capable of governing by such arts as these? Some cannot propose the ends, nor some employ the means; for some are wicked, and some are weak. This general division runs through the whole race of mankind, of the multitudes designed to obey, and of the few designed to govern. It was this depravity of multitudes, as well as their mutual wants, which obliged men first to enter into societies, to depart from their natural liberty, and to subject themselves to government. It was this depravity of the few, (which is often the greater, because born no better than other men, they are educated worse) which obliged men first to subject government to constitution, that they might preserve social, when they gave up natural liberty, and not be oppressed by arbitrary will. Kings may have preceded lawgivers, for aught I know, or have possibly been the first lawgivers, and government by will have been established before government by constitution. Theseus might reign at Athens,

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and Eurytion at Sparta, long before Solon gave laws to one, and Lycurgus to the other of these cities. Kings had governed Rome, we know, and consuls had succeeded kings, long before the decemviri compiled a body of law; and the Saxons had their monarchs before Edgar, though the Saxon laws went under his name. These, and a thousand other instances of the same kind, will never serve to prove what my Lord Bacon would prove by them, "that monarchies do not "subsist, like other governments, by a precedent "law, or compact; that the original submission "to them was natural, like the obedience of a child "to his parents, and that allegiance to hereditary "monarchs is the work of the law of nature*." But that which these examples prove very plainly is, that however men might submit voluntarily in the primitive simplicity of early ages, or be subjected by conquest to a government without a constitution, yet they were never long in discovering, that "to live by one man's will became "the cause of all men's misery†:" and therefore they soon rejected the yoke, or made it sit easy on their necks. They instituted commonwealths, or they limited monarchies: and here began that struggle between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of dominion which always hath subsisted, and that we may not flatter ourselves nor others, must always subsist, except in those instances, of which the most ancient histories furnish so few, the reigns of a

* Argum. in the case of Postnati.

† Hooker's Eccles. Pol. l. 1, sect. 10.

Titus, or a Trajan; for it might look like flattery to quote the present most auspicious reign.

To govern a society of freemen by a constitution founded on the eternal rules of right reason, and directed to promote the happiness of the whole, and of every individual, is the noblest prerogative which can belong to humanity; and if man may be said, without prophaneness, to imitate God in any case, this is the case: but sure I am, he imitates the devil, who is so far from promoting the happiness of others, that he makes his own happiness to consist in the misery of others; who governs by no rule but that of his passions, whatever appearances he is forced sometimes to put on, who endeavours to corrupt the innocent and to enslave the free, whose business is to seduce or betray, whose pleasure is to damn, and whose triumph is to torment. Odious and execrable as this character is, it is the character of every prince who makes use of his power to subvert, or even to weaken that constitution, which ought to be the rule of his government. When such a prince fills a throne with superiour parts, liberty is in the utmost peril; nor does the danger diminish in proportion, if he happens to want them. Such men as we are now to speak of, (friends to the government and enemies to the constitution) will be always at hand to supply his defects; for as they are the willing instruments of a wicked prince, they are the ready prompters of a weak one. They may sink into the mass of the people, and disappear in a good and a wise reign,

or work themselves into power under false colours. "Sed genus immortale manet." Their race will continue as long as ambition and avarice prevail in the world, and there will be bad citizens as long as there are bad men. The good ought therefore to be always on their guard against them, and whatever disguise they assume, whatever veils they cast over their conduct, they will never be able to deceive those long, who observe constantly the difference between constitution and government, and who have virtue enough to preserve the cause of the former, how unprofitable soever it may be at all times, and how unpopular soever at some. ——But I ramble too long in generals. It is high time I should come to those particular measures, by which the men I have described are most likely to carry on their designs against our constitution; after which I shall say something of the methods, by which alone their designs may be prevented, or will be defeated, if a national union oppose itself by such methods as these, in time, to them.

Now that I may do this the better, and make what I have to say the more sensibly felt, give me leave to suppose, though I speak of a remote time, and such a one as we ought to hope will never come, that our national circumstances will be just the same as they are now, and our constitution as far distant as it now is from that point of perfection, to which the revolution ought to have brought it, might have brought it, and hath given the nation a right to expect that it should be brought. The completion of that glorious

deliverance is still imperfect, after five and forty years, notwithstanding the hopes then given, the engagements then taken, and the opportunities that have since arisen. How this hath happened, by what arts this justice to the constitution hath been hitherto evaded, sometimes in favour of one government, and sometimes in favour of another, might easily be shown, and proved too, beyond contradiction. But I had rather exhort than reproach, and especially at a time when a strong tendency appears among men of all denominations to such a national union, as will effectually obtain the complete settlement of our constitution, which hath been so long delayed, if it be honestly, prudently, and vigorously improved.

It is certain then, that if ever such men as call themselves friends to the government, but are real enemies of the constitution, prevail, they will make it a capital point of their wicked policy to keep up a standing army. False appearances of reason for it will never be wanting, as long as there are pretenders to the crown; though nothing can be more absurd than to employ, in defence of liberty, an instrument so often employed to destroy it; though nothing can be more absurd than to maintain that any government ought to make use of the same expedient to support itself, as another government, on the ruins of which this government stands, was subverted for using; though nothing can be proved more manifestly by experience than these two propositions, that Britain is enabled, by her situation, to support her government, when the bulk of her people are for it, without employing

any

any means inconsistent with her constitution; and that the bulk of the people are not only always for the government, when the government supports the constitution, but are even hard and slow to be detached from it, when the government attacks or undermines the constitution, and when they are by consequence both justified in resisting, and even obliged in conscience to resist the government.

I have heard it argued lately, that pretenders abroad are a security at home, and that a government exposed to their attacks will never venture to attack the constitution. I have been told too, that these notions were entertained by some who drew many political consequences from them at the revolution. But if any of those persons are still alive, I persuade myself that they have altered this opinion, since such a situation will furnish at all times pretences of danger; since pretences of danger to a government, whether real or imaginary, will be always urged with plausibility, and generally with success, for obtaining new powers, or for straining old ones; and since while those who mean well to the government are imposed upon by those who mean ill to the constitution, all true concern for the latter is lost in a mistaken zeal for the former, and the most important is ventured to save the least important, when neither one nor the other would have been exposed, if false alarms had not been rashly and too implicitly taken, or if true alarms had not given unnecessary strength to the government at the expense of weakening the constitution.

Notwithstanding what hath been said, I do not imagine that an army would be employed by these men, directly and at first, against the nation and national liberty. I am far from thinking that any men can arise in future times, capable of attempting, in this manner, what some men in our age, who call themselves friends to the government, have been so weak, and so imprudent as to avow in print, and publish to the nation. To destroy British liberty with an army of Britons, is not a measure so sure of success as some people may believe. To corrupt the parliament is a slower, but might prove a more effectual method; and two or three hundred mercenaries in the two houses, if they could be listed there, would be more fatal to the constitution, than ten times as many thousands in red and in blue out of them. Parliaments are the true guardians of liberty. For this principally they were instituted; and this is the principal article of that great and noble trust, which the collective body of the people of Britain reposes in the representative. But then no slavery can be so effectually brought and fixed upon us as parliamentary slavery. By the corruption of parliament, and the absolute influence of a king or his minister, on the two houses, we return into that state, to deliver or secure us from which parliaments were instituted, and are really governed by the arbitrary will of one man. Our whole constitution is at once dissolved. Many securities to liberty are provided, but the integrity which depends on the freedom and the independency of parliament, is the keystone that keeps the whole together.

together. If this be shaken, our constitution totters. If it be quite removed, our constitution falls into ruin. That noble fabrick, the pride of Britain, the envy of her neighbours, raised by the labour of so many centuries, repaired at the expense of so many millions, and cemented by such a profusion of blood; that noble fabrick, I say, which was able to resist the united efforts of so many races of giants, may be demolished by a race of pigmies. The integrity of parliament is a kind of palladium, a tutelary goddess, who protects our state. When she is once removed, we may become the prey of any enemies. No Agamemnon, no Achilles will be wanted to take our city. Thersites himself will be sufficient for such a conquest. But I need not dwell any longer on this subject. There is no man, who thinks at all, can fail to see the several fatal consequences, which will necessarily flow from this one source whenever it shall be opened. If the reason of the thing does not strike him enough, experience must. The single reign of Henry the eighth will serve to show, that no tyranny can be more severe, than that which is exercised by a concert with parliament; that arbitrary will may be made the sole rule of government, even while the names and forms of a free constitution are preserved; that for a prince, or his minister, to become our tyrant, there is no need to abolish parliaments; there is no need that he who is master of one part of the legislature should endeavour to abolish the other

two, when he can use, upon every occasion, the united strength of the whole; there is no need he should be a tyrant in the gross, when he can be so in detail; nor in name, when he can be so in effect; that for parliaments to establish tyranny; there is no need therefore to repeal magna charta, or any other of the great supports, of our liberty. It is enough, if they put themselves corruptly and servilely under the influence of such a prince, or such a minister.—On the whole, I conclude, that in the possible case here supposed, the first and principal object will be to destroy the constitution, under pretence of preserving the government, by corrupting our parliaments. I am the better founded in concluding that this may happen in some future age, by what we may observe in our own. There is surely but too much reason to suspect, that the enemies of our constitution may attempt hereafter to govern by corruption, when we hear and see the friends and advocates of our present, most incorrupt minister harangue and scribble in favour of corruption; when it is pleaded for and recommended, as a necessary expedient of government, by some men, of all ranks and orders; not only by professed hirelings, who write that they may eat, but by men who have talked and written themselves already out of their native obscurity and penury, by affecting zeal in the cause of liberty: not only by such as these, but by men whose birth, education, and fortune, aggravate their crime and their folly: by men, whom

honour

honour at least should restrain from favouring so dishonourable a cause; and by men, whose peculiar obligations to preach up morality should restrain them, at least, from being the preachers of an immorality, above all others abominable in it's nature, and pernicious in it's effects.

These men are ready, I know, to tell us, that the influence they plead for is necessary to strengthen the hands of those who govern; that corruption serves to oil the wheels of government, and to render the administration more smooth and easy; and that it can never be of dangerous consequence under the present father of our country.—Absurd and wicked triflers! "According to them, "our excellent constitution" (as one of your correspondents hath observed extremely well) "is "no better than a jumble of incompatible powers, "which would separate and fall to pieces of them-"selves, unless restrained and upheld by such "honourable methods as those of bribery and cor-"ruption." They would prove, "that the "form of our government is defective to a degree "of ridiculousness." But the ridicule, as well as the iniquity, is their own. A good government can want no power, under the present constitution. A bad one may, and it is fit it should. Popularity is the expedient of one, and will effectually support it. Nothing but corruption can support the other. If there was a real deficiency of power in the crown, it ought to be supplied, no doubt. The old whimsies of prerogative should not be revived; but limitations ought to be taken off, or

new

new powers to be given. The friends of liberty acknowledge that a balance of the powers, divided among the three parts of the legislature, is essential to our constitution, and necessary to support it. The friends of liberty therefore would concur, at least to a certain point, with the friends of the ministry; for the former are friends to order, and enemies to licence. For decency's sake, therefore, let the debate be put on this issue. Let it be such a debate as freemen may avow without blushing. To argue from this supposed deficiency of power in the crown, in favour of a scheme of government repugnant to all laws divine and human, is such an instance of abandoned, villainous prostitution, as the most corrupt ages never saw, and as will place the present age, with infamous preeminence, at the head of them, unless the nation do itself justice, and fix the brand on those who ought alone to bear it.—Thus much for the iniquity of the practice pleaded for. As to the danger of it, let us agree that a prince of such magnanimity and justice as our present monarch can never be tempted by any sordid motives, to forget the recent obligation which he and his family have to the British nation, by whom they were made kings; nor to aim at greater power and wealth, than are consistent with the safety of the constitution they are intrusted to preserve, and obliged to secure. Allowing this to be our present case, (and concerning our present case there are not two opinions, I dare say, in the whole nation)

nation) yet still the symptoms I have mentioned show that the poison, with which these pretended friends of the government, and real enemies of the constitution, corrupt the morals of mankind, hath made some progress; and if this progress be not immediately checked by proper antidotes, and the power of poisoning taken from these empirics, the disease will grow incurable. The last dismal effect of it may not, or if you please, cannot happen in this reign; but it may, nay it must happen in some other, unless we prevent it effectually and soon: and what season more proper to prevent it in, and to complete the security of our liberties, than the reign of a prince, for whom the nation hath done so much, and from whom, by consequence, the nation hath a right to expect so much? King William delivered us from popery and slavery. There was wisdom in his councils, and fortitude in his conduct. He steered through many real difficulties at home, and he fought our battles abroad; and yet those points of security, which had been neglected, or not sufficiently provided for in the honeymoon of his accession, were continually pressed upon him, during the whole course of his reign. The men who pressed them were called jacobites, tories, republicans, and incendiaries too; not from the throne indeed, but by the clamour of those, who showed great indifference at least for the constitution, while they affected great zeal for the government. They succeeded however in part, and we enjoy the benefit of their success. If they did not succeed in the whole;

whole; if the settlement necessary to secure our liberty, and therefore intended at the revolution, be not yet complete, let us be persuaded, and let us act on that persuasion, that the honour of completing it was reserved to crown the glories of the present reign. To finish the great work, which king William began, of establishing the liberties of Britain on firm and durable foundations, must be reputed an honour surely; and to whom can this honour belong more justly than to a prince, who emulates, in so remarkable a manner, all the other heroick virtues of his renowned predecessor?

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XI.

SIR,

If it was possible for any man, who hath the least knowledge of our constitution, to doubt in good earnest whether the preservation of publick freedom depends on the preservation of parliamentary freedom, his doubts might be removed, and his opinion decided, one would imagine, by this single, obvious remark, that all the designs of our princes against liberty, since parliaments began to be established on the model still subsisting, have been directed constantly to one of these two points, either to obtain such parliaments as they could govern, or else to stand all the difficulties, and to run all the hazards of governing without parliaments.

parliaments. The means principally employed to the first of these purposes have been undue influences on the elections of members of the house of commons, and on these members when chosen. When such influences could be employed successfully, they have answered all the ends of arbitrary will; and when they could not be so employed, arbitrary will hath been forced to submit to the constitution. This hath been the case, not only since, but before that great change in the balance of property, which began in the reigns of Henry the seventh and Henry the eighth, and carried a great part of that weight into the scale of the commons, which had lain before in the scale of the peers and clergy.

If we look back as far as the close of the fourteenth century, an æra pretty near to that when parliaments received their present form, we shall find both these means employed by one of the worst of our kings, Richard the second. That he might obtain his will, which was rash, he directed mandates to his sheriffs, (officers of the crown, and appointed by the crown; for such they were then, and such they still are) to return certain persons nominated by himself: and thus he acquired an undue influence over the elections. In the next place, he obliged the persons thus returned, sometimes by threats and terrour, and sometimes by gifts, to consent to those things which were prejudicial to the realm; and thus he acquired an undue influence over the house of commons. So that upon the whole, the arbitrary will of a rash headstrong

headstrong prince, and the suggestions of his wicked ministers guided the proceedings of parliament, and became the law of the land. I might pursue observations of the same kind through several succeeding reigns; but to avoid lengthening these letters, which are grown perhaps too long already, let us descend at once to the reign of king Charles the second, for in that we shall find examples of all the means which a court that hath common sense, and a prince who will not set his crown on the cast of a dye, can take to undermine the foundations of liberty, either by governing parliaments, or by governing without them.

Now the first attempt of this kind, which king Charles made against the constitution, was this: he improved and managed the spirit of the first parliament he called, so as to render the two houses obsequious to his will, almost in every case; and having got the triennial bill repealed, he kept the same parliament in being for many years by prorogations, which crept into custom long before his time, but were still a modern invention with respect to the primitive institution of parliaments, and wholly repugnant to the ancient practice. Thus he established a standing parliament, which is, in the nature of it, as dangerous as a standing army, and may become, in some conjunctures, much more fatal to liberty. When the measures of his administration grew too bad, and the tendency of them too apparent to be defended and supported, even in that parliament, and even by a party

party spirit, he had recourse to a second attempt, that is, to corruption; and Clifford first listed a mercenary band of friends to the government against the constitution.—Let us observe on this occasion, and as we pass along, that a national party, such a party as the court adopts, in contradistinction to such a party as it creates, will always retain some national principles, some regard to the constitution. They may be transported, or surprised, during the heat of contest especially, into measures of long and fatal consequence. They may be carried on, for a certain time and to a certain point, by the lusts of vengeance and of power, in order to wreak one upon their adversaries, and to secure the other to themselves. But a national party will never be the instruments of completing national ruin. They will become the adversaries of their friends, and the friends of their adversaries, to prevent it; and the minister who persists in so villainous a project, by what name soever he may affect to distinguish himself and his followers, will be found really at the head of a faction, not of a party. But the difference between one and the other is so visible, and the boundaries where party ceases and faction commences are so strongly marked, that it is sufficient to point at them.

I return therefore, and observe that when the spirit of party failed king Charles, and the corruption he employed proved ineffectual, he resolved to govern for a time without parliaments, and to employ that time, as soon as he had checked the spirit

spirit of one party, by inflaming that of another, in garbling corporations. He had found by experience, that it was impossible to corrupt the stream in any great degree, as long as the fountain continued pure. He applied himself therefore to spread the taint of the court in them, and to poison those springs, from whence the health and vigour of the constitution flow. This was the third, the last, and by much the most dangerous expedient employed by the friends of the government, in the reign of king Charles the second, to undermine our liberties. The effect of it he did not live to see, but we may easily conjecture what it would have been.

The use I make of what hath been here said is this: the design of the revolution being not only to save us from the immediate attempts on our religion and liberty, made by king James, but to save us from all other attempts which had been made, or might be made, of the same tendency; to renew and strengthen our constitution; "to "establish the peace, honour, and happiness of "these nations upon lasting foundations,—and to "procure a settlement of the religion, and of the "liberties and properties of the subjects, upon so "sure a foundation, that there might be no dan-"ger of the nation's relapsing into the like mise-"ries at any time hereafter*." This being, I say, the avowed design of the revolution, and the nation having engaged in it on a confidence that all this would be effectually performed, the design

* See the prince of Orange's declaration.

design of the revolution was not accomplished, the benefit of it was not secured to us, the just expectations of the nation could not be answered, unless the freedom of elections, and the frequency, integrity, and independency of parliaments were sufficiently provided for. These are the essentials of British liberty. Defects in other parts of the constitution can never be fatal, if these are preserved intire. But defects in these will soon destroy the constitution, though every other part of it should be so preserved. However it happened, the truth and notoriety of the fact oblige us to say, that these important conditions, without which liberty can never be secure, were almost wholly neglected at the revolution. The claim of right declares, indeed, that "elections ought to "be free; that freedom of speech and debates "ought not to be impeached or questioned out "of parliament; and that parliaments ought to "be held frequently." But such declarations, however solemnly made, are nothing better than pompous trifles, if they stand alone; productive of no good; and thus far productive of ill, that they serve to amuse mankind in points of the greatest importance, and wherein it concerns them the most nearly neither to be deceived, nor so much as amused. These were rights, no doubt, to which the nation had an indisputable claim. But then they ought to have been more than claimed, since they had been so often and so lately invaded. That they were not more than claimed, that they were not effectually asserted and secured, at this time, gave very great

and immediate dissatisfaction; and they who were called whigs in those days distinguished themselves by the loudness of their complaints. Thus, for instance, they insisted that there could be no "real settlement; nay, that it was a jest "to talk of a settlement, till the manner and "time of calling parliaments, and their sitting "when called, were fully determined:" and this in order to prevent the practice of "keeping one "and the same parliament so long on foot, "till the majority was corrupted by offices, gifts "and pensions *." They insisted that the assurances given at the revolution had led them to think, that, "the ancient, legal course of an-"nually chosen parliaments would have been im-"mediately restored †;" and the particular circumstances of king William, who had received the crown by gift of the people, and who had renewed the original contract with the people, which are precisely the circumstances of the present royal family, were urged as particular reasons for the nation to expect his compliance.

The frequent sitting of parliament was indeed provided for, indirectly and in consequence, by the exigencies of the war, which soon followed the revolution. This war made annual supplies necessary; and, before it was over, the same necessity of annual sessions of parliament came to be established, as it continues to this hour, by the great alteration made with relation to the publick revenue. The whole publick revenue had been

* See Considerations concerning the State of the Nation, by Mr. Hambden, published in 1692.

† An Inquiry, or a Discourse, &c. published in 1693.

the

the king's formerly. Parliamentary aids were, in those days, extraordinary and occasional; and things came to that pass at last, that parliaments were more frequently, or more rarely convened, just as courts had more frequent or more rare occasions for such supplies. But king William began to be, and all our princes since him have continued to be, only proprietors for life of that part of the publick revenue, which is appropriated to their civil list; although they are intrusted still with the management of the whole, and are even the stewards of the publick creditors for that part which is the private property of these creditors. This is the present state, sufficiently known, but necessary to be mentioned particularly on this occasion: and this must continue to be the state, unless some prince should arise hereafter, who, being advised by a desperate minister, abetted by a mercenary faction, supported by a standing army, and instigated, like Richard the second, by the "rashnes of his own temper *," may lay rapacious hands on all the funds that have been created, and by applying illegally what he may raise legally, convert the whole to his own use, and so establish arbitrary power, by depriving at one stroke many of his subjects of their property, and all of them of their liberty. Till this happens, (and Heaven forbid that it should be ever attempted!) sessions of parliament must be annually held, or the government itself be distressed. But neither is this such a direct and full security as the impor-

* Per immoderatam voluntatem.

tance of the thing requires; nor does the security of our liberty consist only in frequent sessions of parliaments, but it consists likewise in frequent new parliaments. Nay, it consists so much more in this than in the other, that the former may tend without the latter, even more than the discontinuance of parliaments, to the loss of liberty. This was foreseen by the wisdom of our constitution. According to that, although it became in time, by the course of events, and insensible alterations, no longer necessary to call parliaments once, or even twice in a year, which had been the more ancient practice, yet still our kings continued under an incapacity of proceeding long in government, with any tolerable ease and safety to themselves, without the concurrence and assistance of these assemblies. According to the same constitution, as parliaments were to be held, so they were to be chosen frequently; and the opinion, that the "holding and continuance of parliaments de-"pended absolutely on the will of the prince," may be justly ranked among those attempts, that were made by some men to set the law, while others endeavoured to set the Gospel, on the side of arbitrary power. This is the plain intent and scheme of our constitution, which provides that the representatives of the people should have frequent opportunities to communicate together about national grievances; to complain of them, and to obtain the redress of them, in an orderly, solemn, legal manner: and that the people should have frequent opportunities of calling their

their representatives to account, as it were, for the discharge of the trust committed to them, and of approving or disapproving their conduct, by electing or not electing them anew. Thus our constitution supposes that princes may abuse their power, and parliaments betray their trust; and provides, as far as human wisdom can provide, that neither one nor the other may be able to do so long, without a sufficient control. If the crown, indeed, persists in usurping on the liberty of the people, or in any other kind of maleadministration; and if the prince who wears it proves deaf, as our princes have sometimes been, to the voice of his parliament and his people, there remains no remedy in the system of the constitution. The constitution is broken by the obstinacy of the prince, and the "people must appeal to Heaven in this, "as in all other cases, where they have no judge "on Earth.*" Thus if a parliament should persist in abetting maleadministration, or any way give up those liberties which they were intrusted to maintain, no doubt can be made but that the people would be in the same case; since their representatives have no more right to betray them, than their kings have to usurp upon them: and by consequence they would acquire the same right of appealing to Heaven, if our constitution had not provided a remedy against this evil, which could not be provided against the other; but our constitution hath provided such a remedy in the frequent succession of new parliaments, by which there is

* Locke's Essay upon Government, chap. 14.

not time sufficient given to form a majority of the representatives of the people into a ministerial cabal; or by which, if this should happen, such a cabal must be soon broken. These reflections, and such others as they naturally suggest, are sufficient to convince any thinking man, first, that nothing could make it safe, nor therefore reasonable, to repose in any set of men whatsoever, so great a trust as the collective body delegates to the representative in this kingdom, except the shortness of the term for which this trust is delegated. Secondly, that every prolongation of this term is therefore, in it's degree, unsafe for the people; that it weakens their security, and endangers liberty by the very powers given for it's preservation. Thirdly, that such prolongations expose the nation, in the possible case of having a corrupt parliament, to lose the great advantage which our constitution hath provided, of curing the evil, before it grows confirmed and desperate, by the gentle method of choosing a new representative; and reduce the nation, by consequence, to have no other alternative than that of submitting or resisting; though submission will be as grievous, and resistance much more difficult, when the legislature betrays it's trust, than when the king alone abuses his power.—These reflections, I say, are sufficient to prove these propositions; and these propositions set before us, in a very strong light, the necessity of using our utmost efforts, that the true design of our constitution may be pursued as closely as possible, by the reestablishment of annual

annual, or at least of triennial parliaments. But the importance of the matter, and the particular seasonableness of the conjuncture, invite me to offer one consideration more upon this head, which I think will not strike the less for being obvious and plain. It is this. Should a king obtain, for many years at once, the supplies and powers which used to be granted annually to him; this would be deemed, I presume, even in the present age, an unjustifiable measure, and an intolerable grievance, for this plain reason; because it would alter our constitution in the fundamental article, that requires frequent assemblies of the whole legislature, in order to assist, and control too, the executive power which is intrusted with one part of it. Now I ask, is not the article which requires frequent elections of the representative, by the collective body of the people, in order to secure the latter against the ill consequences of the possible weakness or corruption of the former, as fundamental an article, and as essential to the preservation of our liberties, as the other? No man dares say that it is not; at least, no man who deserves our attention. The people of Britain have as good a right, and a right as necessary to be asserted, to keep their representatives true to the trust reposed in them, and to the preservation of the constitution, by the control of frequent elections, as they have to keep their kings true to the trust reposed in them, and to the preservation of the constitution, by the control of frequent sittings of parliament. How

comes it then to pass, that we may observe so great a difference in the sentiments of mankind about these two cases? Propose the first, there is no servile friend of government, who will not affect all that horrour at the proposition, which every friend of the constitution will really feel. Propose the keeping up septennial, nay the making decennial parliaments, the same friends of government will contend strenuously for one, and by consequence for both; since there can be no reason alleged for the first, which is not stronger for the last, and would not be still stronger for a longer term. These reasons, drawn from two or three commonplace topicks of pretended conveniency and expediency, or of supposed tranquillity at home, and strength abroad, I need not mention. They have been mentioned by others, and sufficiently refuted. But that which may very justly appear marvellous is this: that some men, I think not many, who are true friends of the constitution, have been staggered in their opinions, and almost seduced by the false reasonings of these friends of government; though nothing can be more easy than to show, from reason and experience, that convenience, expediency, and domestick tranquillity may be, and in fact have been as well, nay, better secured under triennial, nay, annual parliaments, than under parliaments of a longer continuance; and as for strength abroad, that is, national credit and influence, it will depend on the opinion foreign nations have of our national dispositions, and the unanimity of our sentiments. It must

must be chiefly determined therefore by their knowledge of the real sense of the nation. Now that can appear no way so much as in the natural state of our constitution, by frequent elections; and when it does appear so, it must have another kind of effect than the bare resolutions of a stale ministerial parliament; especially if it happens, as it may happen in some future time, that the sense of the nation should appear to be different from the sense of such a parliament; and that the resolutions of such a parliament should be avowedly dictated by men, odious and hated, contemptible and contemned both at home and abroad.

But in the supposition that some inconveniencies may arise by frequent elections, which is only allowed for argument's sake, are such inconveniencies, and the trifling consequences of them, to be set in the balance against the danger of weakening any one barrier of our liberty? Every form of government hath advantages and disadvantages peculiar to it. Thus absolute monarchies seem most formed for sudden and vigorous efforts of power, either in attacking or in defending; while, in free constitutions, the forms of government must be necessarily more complicated and slow; so that in these, the same secrecy cannot be always kept, nor the same dispatch always made, nor the same steadiness of measures always pursued. Must all these forms, instituted to preserve the checks and controls of the several parts of the constitution on one another, and necessary by consequence to preserve the liberty of the whole, be

be abandoned therefore, and a free constitution be destroyed, for the sake of some little conveniency, or expediency the more, in the administration of publick affairs? No certainly. We must keep our free constitution, with the small defects belonging to it, or we must change it for an arbitrary government, free perhaps from these defects, but liable to more and to worse. In short, we must make our option; and surely this option is not hard to be made, between the real and permanent blessings of liberty, diffused through a whole nation, and the fantastick and accidental advantages which they who govern, not the body of the people, enjoy under absolute monarchies. I will not multiply instances, though they crowd in upon me.—Two consuls were chosen annually at Rome, and the proconsular power in the government of provinces was limited to a year. Several inconveniences arose, no doubt, from the strict observation of this institution. Some appear very plain in history: and we may assure ourselves, that many arguments of conveniency, of expediency, of preserving the tranquillity of the city, and of giving strength and weight to the arms and counsels of the commonwealth, were urged to prevail on the people to dispense with these institutions, in favour of Pompey and of Cæsar. What was the consequence? The pirates were extirpated, the price of corn was reduced, Spain was held in subjection, Gaul was conquered, the Germans were repulsed, Rome triumphed, her government flourished; but her constitution was destroyed, her liberty

liberty was lost.—The law of habeas corpus, that noble badge of liberty, which every subject of Britain wears, and by which he is distinguished so eminently, not from the slaves alone, but even from the freemen of other countries; the law of habeas corpus, I say, may be attended perhaps with some little inconveniencies, in time of sedition and rebellion.—The slow methods of giving money, and the strict appropriations of it, when given, may be attended with some inconveniency likewise, in times of danger, and in great exigencies of the state.—But who will plead for the repeal of the habeas corpus act; or who would not press for the revival of it, if it stood suspended for an indefinite, or even a long term?—Who will say that the practice of giving money without account, or passing votes of credit, by which the purse of the people is taken out of the hands of those whom the people trusted, and put into the hands of those whom they neither did, nor would have trusted; who will say that such a deviation from those rules of parliament, which ought to be deemed sacred and preserved inviolate, may be established, or should not be opposed by all possible means, if it was established?

If all this be as clear as I imagine it is; if the objections to frequent elections of parliaments do not lie; or, supposing them to lie, if the danger on one side outweighs vastly the supposed inconveniency on the other; nay, if laws and institutions, not more essential to the preservation of liberty than this ancient and fundamental rule of

of our constitution, be maintained; and if all men are forced to agree, even they, who wish them perhaps abolished, that they ought to be maintained, for the sake of preserving liberty; let me ask again, how comes it to pass, that we observe so great a difference between the sentiments and reasonings of mankind about frequent sessions of parliament, and frequent parliaments; about the case now before us, and all the others that have been mentioned? The only manner, in which I can account for such an inconsistency, is this. The sight of the mind differs very much from the sight of the body, and it's operations are frequently the reverse of the other. Objects at a distance appear to the former in their true magnitude, and diminish as they are brought nearer. The event, that created much astonishment, indignation, or terrour in prospect, creates less and less as it approaches, and by the time it happens, men have familiarized themselves with it.—If the Romans had been told, in the days of Augustus, that an emperor would succeed, in whose reign a horse should be made consul, they would have been extremely surprised. I believe they were not so much surprised when the thing happened, when the horse was consul and Caligula emperor.—If it had been foretold to those patriots at the revolution, who remembered long parliaments, who still felt the smart of them, who struggled hard for annual, and obtained with much difficulty, at the end of five or six years, triennial parliaments, that a time would come, when even the

the term of triennial parliaments would be deemed too short, and a parliament, chosen for three years, would choose itself for four more, and entail septennial parliaments on the nation; that this would happen, and the fruits of their honest labours be lost, in little more than twenty years; and that it would be brought about, while our government continued on the foundations they had then so newly laid: if all this had been foretold at the time I mention, it would have appeared improbable and monstrous to the friends of the revolution. Yet it hath happened; and in less than twenty years, it is grown, or is growing, familiar to us. The uniform zeal and complaisance of our parliaments for the crown leave little room to apprehend any attempt to govern without them, or to make them do in one session the work of seven; though this would be extremely convenient, no doubt, a great ease to future ministers, and a great saving of expense and time to country gentlemen. But suppose, for I desire it may be remembered that we reason hypothetically, suppose a parliament should think fit to give, in the first session, all the money, all the credit, and all the powers necessary for carrying on the government, during seven years; and then let those persons, who will be shocked at this supposition, and yet declare themselves for septennial parliaments, lay their hands on their hearts, and consider whether such an alteration of the constitution might not grow familiar to them, and even gain their approbation. I think

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it would do so. I am sure it might as reasonably as the other. They would find the ease, in one case, of little attendance, as much as that of distant elections in the other. The arguments of conveniency, expediency, publick tranquillity, and strength to the government, would be just as well applied; and if the ministers should, by miracle, make no very exorbitant ill use of such a situation, I doubt whether he who should plead for annual parliaments then would be much better heard by the same persons, than he who pleads for frequent elections of parliaments is now. But let not the lovers of liberty, the friends of our constitution, reason in this manner. Let them remember, that danger commences when the breach is made, not when the attack is begun; that he who neglects to stop the leak as soon as it is discovered, in hopes to save his ship by pumping, when the water gushes in with violence, deserves to be drowned; and, to lay aside figures of speech, that our constitution is not, like the schemes of some politicians, a jumble of disjointed, incoherent whimsies, but a noble and wise system, the essential parts of which are so proportioned, and so intimately connected, that a change in one begets a change in the whole; that the frequent elections of parliament are as much an essential part of this system, as the frequent sittings of parliament; that the work of the revolution is imperfect therefore, and our future security precarious, unless our ancient constitution be restored, in this essential part; and that the restoration

restoration of it, in this part, is one of those methods, by which alone the pernicious designs of such men as we have mentioned in a former letter, if any such should be ever admitted into power, (enemies to the constitution, under the mask of zeal for the government) may be defeated.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XII.

SIR,

WE have observed already, that the constitution of the British government supposes our kings may abuse their power, and our representatives betray their trust, and provides against both these contingencies, as well as human wisdom can provide. Here let us observe, that the same constitution is very far from supposing the people will ever betray themselves; and yet this case is possible no doubt. We do not read, I think, of more than one nation *, who refused liberty when it was offered to them; but we read of many, and have almost seen some, who lost it through their own fault, by the plain and necessary consequences of their own conduct, when they were in full possession of it, and had the means of securing it effectually in their power. A wise and

* The Cappadocians, see Strabo, lib. 12.——"Libertatem repudiaverunt, ut quam sibi dicerent intolerabilem."

brave

brave people will neither be cozened, nor bullied out of their liberty; but a wise and brave people may cease to be such: they may degenerate; they may sink into sloth and luxury; they may resign themselves to a treacherous conduct; or abet the enemies of the constitution, under a notion of supporting the friends of the government: they may want the sense to discern their danger in time, or the courage to resist, when it stares them in the face. The Tarquins were expelled, and Rome resumed her liberty. Cæsar was murdered, and all his race extinct, but Rome remained in bondage. From whence this difference? Machiavel shall account for it †. In the days of Tarquin the people of Rome were not yet corrupted. In the days of Cæsar they were most corrupt. A free people may be sometimes betrayed; but no people will betray themselves, and sacrifice their liberty, unless they fall into a state of universal corruption: and when they are once fallen into such a state, they will be sure to lose what they deserve no longer to enjoy. To what purpose therefore should our constitution have supposed a case, in which no remedy can avail; a case which can never happen, till the spirit which formed this constitution first, and hath preserved it ever since, shall be totally extinguished; and till it becomes an ideal entity, like the Utopia, existing in the imagination, or memory, no where else? As all government began, so all government must end by

† Discourses, lib. i, c. 17.

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the people; tyrannical governments by their virtue and courage, and even free governments by their vice and baseness. Our constitution, indeed, makes it impossible to destroy liberty by any sudden blast of popular fury, or by the treachery of a few; for though the many cannot easily hurt, they may easily save themselves. But if the many will concur with the few; if they will advisedly and deliberately suffer their liberty to be taken away by those, to whom they delegate power to preserve it; this no constitution can prevent. God would not support even his own theocracy against the concurrent desire of the children of Israel, but gave them a king in his anger. How then should our human constitution of government support itself against so universal a change, as we here suppose, in the temper and character of our people? It cannot be. We may give ourselves a tyrant in our folly, if we please. But this can never happen, till the whole nation falls into a state of political reprobation. Then, and not till then, political damnation will be our lot.

Let us descend into a greater detail in order to develope these reflections fully, and to push the consequences of them home to ourselves, and to our present state. They deserve our utmost attention, and are so far from being foreign to the subject of these essays upon parties, that they will terminate in the very point at which we began, and wind up the whole in one important lesson.

To proceed then: I say, that if the people of this island should suffer their liberties to be at any time ravished, or stolen from them, they would incur greater blame, and deserve by consequence less pity, than any enslaved and oppressed people ever did. By how much true liberty, that is, liberty stated and ascertained by law, in equal opposition to popular licence and arbitrary will, hath been more boldly asserted, more wisely or more successfully improved, and more firmly established in this than in other countries, by so much the more heavy would our just condemnation prove in the case that is here supposed. The virtue of our ancestors, to whom all these advantages are owing, would aggravate the guilt and the infamy of their degenerate posterity. There have been ages of gold and of silver, of brass and of iron, in our little world, as in the great world, though not in the same order. In which of these ages we are at present, let others determine. This, at least, is certain, that in all these ages Britain hath been the temple, as it were, of liberty. While her sacred fires have been extinguished in so many countries, here they have been religiously kept alive. Here she hath her saints, her confessors, and a whole army of martyrs, and the gates of Hell have not hitherto prevailed against her; so that if a fatal reverse is to happen; if servility and servitude are to overrun the whole world, and liberty is to retire from it, like Astræa, our portion of the abandoned globe will have at least the mournful honour, whenever it happens, of showing her last, her parting step.

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The ancient Britons are to us the aborigines of our island. We discover little of them through the gloom of antiquity, and we see nothing beyond them. This however we know, they were freemen. Cæsar, who visited them in a hostile manner, but did not conquer them, perhaps was beaten by them*; Cæsar, I say, bestows very liberally the title of kings upon their chieftains, and the compilers of fabulous traditions deduce a series of their monarchs from Samothes, a contemporary of Nimrod. But Cæsar affected to swell the account of his expedition with pompous names; and these writers, like those whom Strabo mentions †, endeavoured to recommend themselves by publishing romances to an ignorant generation, instead of histories. These supposed monarchs were the heads of little clans; "reguli, vel melioris "notæ nobiles§;" and if our island knew any authority of the kingly sort in those days, it was that of occasional and temporary monarchs, elected in great exigencies, "communi consilio, suffragiis "multitudinis," like Cassivellaunus in Britain, or Vercingetorix in Gaul‖; for, in some cases, examples taken from either of these people will conclude for both. The kings who ruled in Britain after the Romans abandoned the island, in the beginning of the fifth century, held their authority from the people, and governed under the control of national assemblies, as we have great reason to be-

* Terrâ quæsitis ostendit terga Britannis. † Geog. lib. 11.
§ Sel. Anal. Anglo Brit. lib. 2, cap. 3, Cam.
‖ Cæs. de Bell. Gall. lib. 5 & 7.

lieve, and none to doubt. In short, as far as we can look back, a lawless power, a government by will, never prevailed in Britain.

The Saxons had kings, as well as the Britons. The manner in which they established themselves, and the long wars they waged for and against the Britons, led to and maintained monarchical rule among them. But these kings were in their first institution, no doubt, such as Tacitus describes the German kings and princes to have been: chiefs who persuaded, rather than commanded; and who were heard in the publick assemblies of the nation, according as their age, their nobility, their military fame, or their eloquence gave them authority *. How many doughty monarchs, in later and more polite ages, would have slept in cottages, and have worked in stalls, instead of inhabiting palaces, and being cushioned up in thrones, if this rule of government had continued in force?—But the Saxon kings grew into power in time; and among them, as among other nations, birth, instead of merit, became, for the sake of order and tranquillity, a title to the throne. However, though these princes might command, and were no longer under the necessity of governing by persuasion, they were still under that of governing to the satisfaction of the people. By what other expedient could they govern men, who were wise enough to preserve and exercise the right of electing their civil magistrates and military officers, and the system of whose government was upheld and carried on

* De Situ, Mor. & Pop. Germ. lib. 11.

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by a gradation of popular assemblies, from the inferiour courts to the high court of parliament; for such, or very near such, was the Wittena Gemote, in nature and effect, whenever the word parliament came into use?

The first prince of the Normar race was an absolute conqueror, in the opinion of some men; and I can readily agree, that he assumed, in some cases, the power of a tyrant. But supposing all this to be true in the utmost extent, that the friends of absolute monarchy can desire it should be thought so, this, and this alone will result from it; unlimited or absolute monarchy could never be eſtablished in Britain; no, not even by conqueſt. The rights of the people were soon reasserted; the laws of the confessor were restored; and the third prince of this race, Henry the first, covenanted in a solemn speech to his people, for their assistance against his brother Robert and the Normans, by promising that sacred charter, which was in other reigns so often and so solemnly confirmed, by engaging to maintain his subjects in their ancient liberties, to follow their advice, and to rule them in peace with prudence and mildness*.

I need not descend into more particulars, to show the perpetuity of free government in Britain. Few men, even in this age, are so shamefully unacquainted with the history of their country, as to be ignorant of the principal events and signal revolutions, which have happened since the

* In antiquis vestris libertatibus. Vestris inclinando consiliis. Consultius & mitius, more mansueti principis.—Vid. Mat. Par.

Norman

Norman æra. One continued design against liberty hath been carried on by various methods, almost in every reign. In many, the struggles have been violent and bloody. But liberty still hath triumphed over force, over treachery, over corruption, and even under oppression. The altars of tyranny have been demolished as soon as raised; nay, even while they were raising, and the priests of that idol have been hewed to pieces: so that I will affirm, without the least apprehension of being disproved, that our constitution is brought nearer than any other constitution ever was, to the most perfect idea of a free system of government.—One observation only I will make, before I leave this head, and it is this. The titles of those kings which were precarious, from circumstances of times, and notions that prevailed, notwithstanding the general acquiescence of the nation to them, afforded so many opportunities to our ancestors of better securing, or improving liberty. They were not such bubbles as to alter, without mending the government; much less to make revolutions, and suffer by them. They were not such bubbles as to raise princes to the throne, who had no pretence to sit in it but their choice, purely to have the honour of bettering the condition of those princes, without bettering their own in proportion.—If what I have been saying appears a little too digressive from the main scope of this essay, I shall hope for indulgence from this consideration, that the natural effect of such reflections, as I have made and suggested,

must be to raise in our minds the honest ambition of emulating the virtue and courage of our forefathers in the cause of liberty; and to inspire a reasonable fear, heightened by shame, of losing what they preserved and delivered down to us, through so many mixtures of different people, of Britons with Saxons, of both with Danes, of all three with Normans, through so many difficulties, so many dangers, so many revolutions, in the course of so many centuries.

There is another reason to be given, why the people of this island would be more inexcusable than any other, if they lost their liberty; and the opening and enforcing of this reason will bring us fully into our subject.

I supposed just now that our liberty might be ravished or stolen from us; but I think that expression must be retracted, since it will appear, upon due consideration, that our liberty cannot be taken away by the force or fraud alone of those who govern; it cannot be taken away, unless the people are themselves accomplices; and they who are accomplices cannot be said to suffer by one or the other. Some nations have received the yoke of servitude with little or no struggle; but if ever it is imposed upon us, we must not only hold out our necks to receive it, we must help to put it on. Now, to be passive in such a case is shameful; but to be active is supreme and unexampled infamy. In order to become slaves, we of this nation must be beforehand what other people have been rendered by a long course of

servitude; we must become the most corrupt, the most profligate, the most senseless, the most servile nation of wretches, that ever disgraced humanity: for a force sufficient to ravish liberty from us such as a great standing army is in time of peace, cannot be continued, unless we continue it; nor can the means necessary to steal liberty from us, be long enough employed with effect, unless we give a sanction to their iniquity, and call good evil, and evil good.

It may be said, that even the friends of liberty have sometimes different notions about it, and about the means of maintaining or promoting it; and therefore, that even the British nation may possibly, some time or other, approve and concur in measures destructive of their liberty, without any intention to give it up, and much more without changing from the character, which they have hitherto borne among the societies of mankind, to that infamous character I have just now supposed. If this were true, it would only furnish more reasons to be always on our guard, to be jealous of every extraordinary demand, and to reject constantly every proposition, though never so specious, that had a tendency to weaken the barriers of liberty, or to raise a strength superiour to theirs. But I confess I do not think we can be led blindfold so far as the brink of the precipice. I know that all words, which are signs of complex ideas, furnish matter of mistake and cavil. We dispute about justice, for instance, and fancy that we have different opinions about the same

same thing; while, by some little difference in the composition of our ideas, it happens that we have only different opinions about different things, and should be of the same opinion about the same thing. But this, I presume, cannot happen in the case before us. All disputes about liberty in this country, and at this time, must be disputes for and against the self same fixed and invariable set of ideas, whatever the disputants on one side of the question may pretend, in order to conceal, what it is not yet very safe to avow. No disputes can possibly arise from different conceptions of any thing so clearly stated, and so precisely determined, as the fundamental principles are, on which our whole liberty rests.

If liberty be that delicious and wholesome fruit, on which the British nation hath fed for so many ages, and to which we owe our riches, our strength, and all the adavntages we boast of; the British constitution is the tree that bears this fruit, and will continue to bear it, as long as we are careful to fence it in, and trench it round, against the beasts of the field, and the insects of the earth. To speak without a figure, our constitution is a system of government suited to the genius of our nation, and even to our situation. The experience of many hundred years hath shown, that by preserving this constitution inviolate, or by drawing it back to the principles on which it was originally founded, whenever it shall be found to swerve from them, we may secure to ourselves, and to our latest posterity, the possession of that liberty

liberty which we have long enjoyed. What would we more? What other liberty than this do we seek? And if we seek no other, is not this marked out in such characters, as he that runs may read? As our constitution therefore ought to be, what it seldom is, the rule of government, so let us make the conformity, or repugnancy of things to this constitution, the rule by which we accept them as favourable, or reject them as dangerous to liberty. They who talk of liberty in Britain on any other principles than those of the British constitution, talk impertinently at best, and much charity is requisite to believe no worse of them. But they who distinguish between practicable and impracticable liberty, in order to insinuate what they mean, or they mean nothing, that the liberty established by the true scheme of our constitution is of the impracticable kind; and they who endeavour, both in speculation and practice, to elude and pervert the forms, and to ridicule and explode the spirit of this constitution: these men are enemies, open and avowed enemies to it, and by consequence to British liberty, which cannot be supported on any other bottom.—Some men there are, the pests of society I think them, who pretend a great regard to religion in general, but who take every opportunity of declaiming publickly against that system of religion, or at least against that church-establishment, which is received in Britain. Just so the men of whom I have been speaking affect a great regard to liberty in general, but they dislike

like so much the system of liberty established in Britain, that they are incessant in their endeavours to puzzle the plainest thing in the world, and to refine and distinguish away the life and strength of our constitution, in favour of the little, present, momentary turns, which they are retained to serve. What now would be the consequence, if all these endeavours should succeed? I am persuaded, that the great philosophers, divines, lawyers, and politicians, who exert them, have not yet prepared and agreed upon the plans of a new religion, and of new constitutions in church and state. We should find ourselves therefore without any form of religion or civil government. The first set of these missionaries would take off all the restraints of religion from the governed, and the latter set would remove, or render ineffectual, all the limitations and controls, which liberty hath prescribed to those that govern, and disjoint the whole frame of our constitution. Entire dissolution of manners, confusion, anarchy, or perhaps absolute monarchy, would follow; for it is possible, nay probable, that in such a state as this, and amidst such a route of lawless savages, men would choose this government, absurd as it is, rather than have no government at all.

But here again it may be said, that as liberty is a word of uncertain signification; so is constitution; that men have taught the most opposite doctrines, and pretended at least to build them on the principles of the constitution; that the rule

rule therefore of determining our notions of liberty by the principles of our constitution is no rule, and we are by consequence just where we were before. But the answer is ready. It is true that there were formerly men who persisted long in the attempt to talk and write that chimera called prerogative into vogue; to contend that it was something real, a right inherent in the crown, founded in the constitution of our government; and equally necessary to support the just authority of the prince, and to protect the subject. How we had like to have lost our liberty by the prevalence of such doctrines, by the consequences drawn from them, and the practices built upon them, hath been touched in the deduction of the state of parties. But happily this kind of progression from a free to a slavish constitution of government was stopped at the revolution, and the notions themselves are so exploded in the course of six and forty years, that they are entertained at this hour by no set of men, whose numbers or importance give them any pretence to be reckoned among our national parties. It is as true, that there are now men who pursue the very same design by different methods. The former attacked, these undermine our liberty. The former were the beasts of the field, hinted at above; these are the insects of the earth; and like other insects, though sprung from dirt, and the vilest of the animal kind, they can nibble and gnaw, and poiſon; and, if they are suffered to multiply and work on, they can lay the most fruitful

fruitful country waste. Corruption and dependency are their favourite topicks. They plead for the first as a laudable expedient of government; and for the last, I mean corrupt, private dependency as an essential part of our constitution. When they have perplexed, as much as they are able, our ideas of dependency and independency, they reason, if I may give their sophisms so good a name, as if the independency of each part of the legislature, of the king particularly, arose from the dependency of the other parts on that part. Now this is both false and absurd.—It is false because the constitutional independency of each part of the legislature arises from hence, that distinct rights, powers, and privileges are assigned to it by the constitution. But then this independency of one part can be so little said to arise from the dependency of another, that it consists properly and truly in the free, unbiassed, uninfluenced and independent exercise of these rights powers and privileges by each part, in as ample an extent as the constitution allows, or, in other words, as far as that point, where the constitution stops this free exercise, and submits the proceedings of one part, not to the private influence, but to the publick control of the other parts. Before this point, the independency of each part is meant by the constitution to be absolute. From this point the constitutional dependency of each part on the others commences. To talk of natural independency belonging to the kingly office, to a house of peers, or house of commons, the institutions

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

MUCH hath been said occasionally, in the course of these letters, concerning the beauty and excellency of the British constitution. I shall make, however, no excuse for returning to the same subject, upon an occasion which introduces it so naturally, and indeed so necessarily. Nothing can be more apposite to the professed design of these writings; nothing of more real, and more present use. Let me speak plainly. We have been all of us, those of every side, and of every denomination, accustomed too long to value ourselves, foolishly or knavishly, on our zeal for this or that party, or for this or that government; and to make a merit of straining the constitution different ways, in order to serve the different purposes of each. It is high time we should all learn, if that be still possible, to value ourselves in the first place on our zeal for the constitution; to make all governments, and much more all parties bow to that, and to suffer that to bow to none. But how shall this constitution be known, unless we make it the subject of careful inquiry, and of frequent and sober reflection? Or unknown, how shall it become what it ought to be, the object of our admiration, our love and our zeal? Many of those, who reap the greatest advantages from it, pass it by unregarded, with equal folly and ingratitude. Many take

take a transient, inattentive view of it Many again consider it in part only, or behold it in a narrow, pedantick light. Instead of this, we should view it often. We should pierce through the form to the soul of it. We should contemplate the noble object in all it's parts, and in the whole, and render it as familiar to our intellectual sight, as the most common sensible objects are to our corporal sight. "Quam illa ardentes amores excitaret sui, si videretur*?" Well may it be allowed me to apply to so glorious an effort of human wisdom, what Tully says after Plato, in the Phædon, if I mistake not, of wisdom herself.

"All publick regiment," says Mr. Hooker, "hath "arisen from deliberate advice, consultation and "composition between men." The proposition is undoubtedly and universally true. It is as true in the kingdom of Morocco, as it is in the kingdom of Britain; and the undeniable consequences which flow from it are obvious. We are not to wonder, however, if men do not look up to this original of government, nor trace these consequences from it in most countries. In the institution of governments, too great powers have been usually given, and too great confidence reposed, either at first or in process of time. These powers have subsisted, have been confirmed by more time, and increased by the very nature of power, which is the properest instrument of it's own propagation. But the original composition, for want of being expressed, or sufficiently implied, or frequently

*Cic. de Finib. l. 2.

recurred to by the forms of the government, hath been forgot, or hath grown so obsolete, that they, whose interest required that no such thing should be believed, have thought themselves at liberty boldly to deny it; and not only so, but to suppose some other original of government. Strange systems of policy and stranger of religion have been devised, to support and sanctify these usurpations. Education hath been set on the same side; and saucy authority hath prevailed against the clearest light of nature, and plainest dictates of common sense. No man who hath read and looked abroad into the world, and made a reasonable use of either, will think this too strange to be true; since there is no demonstrated truth (such truths I mean as are here spoken of) which may not be rendered at least very problematical, by long, uniform, positive contradiction; nor any demonstrated lie, which may not be rendered probable to many, and certain to some, by a long, uniform, positive affirmation; according to a just observation made by father Paul somewhere or other, on occasion of Constantine's supposed grant, and other cheats of the court of Rome. But we of this country have been more happy. Our original contract hath been recurred to often, and as many cavils as have been made, as many jests as have been broke about this expression, we might safely defy the assertors of absolute monarchy and arbitrary will, if there were any worth our regard, to produce any one point of time, since which we know any thing of our constitution, wherein

wherein the whole scheme of it would not have been one monstrous absurdity, unless an original contract had been supposed. They must have been blinded therefore by ignorance, or passion, or prejudice, who did not always see, that there is such a thing necessarily, and in the very nature of our constitution; and that they might as well doubt whether the foundations of an ancient, solid building were suited and proportioned to the elevation and form of it, as whether our constitution was established by composition and contract. Sure I am that they must be worse than blind, if any such there are, who do not confess at this time, and under the present settlement, that our constitution is in the strictest sense a bargain, a conditional contract between the prince and the people, as it always hath been, and still is, between the representative and collective bodies of the nation.

That this bargain may not be broken, on the part of the prince, with the people, (though the executive power be trusted to the prince, to be exercised according to such rules, and by the ministry of such officers, as are prescribed by the laws and customs of this kingdom) the legislative or supreme power is vested by our constitution in three estates, whereof the king is one. While the members of the other two preserve their private independency, and those estates are consequently under no dependency, except that which is in the scheme of our constitution, this control on the first will always be sufficient; and a bad king, let him be as bold as he may please to be

thought, must stand in awe of an honest parliament.

That this bargain may not be broken, on the part of the representative body, with the collective body of the nation, it is not only a principal, declared right of the people of Britain, that the election of members to sit in parliament shall be free, but it hath been a principal part of the care and attention of parliaments, for more than three hundred years, to watch over this freedom, and to secure it, by removing all influence of the crown, and all other corrupt influence, from these elections. This care and this attention have gone still farther. They have provided, as far as they have been suffered to provide hitherto, by the constitutional dependency of one house on the other, and of both on the crown, that all such influence should be removed from the members after they are chosen. Even here the providence of our constitution hath not stopped. Lest all other provisions should be ineffectual, to keep the members of the house of commons out of this unconstitutional dependency, which some men presume, with a silly dogmatical air of triumph, to suppose necessary to support the constitutional independency of the crown, the wisdom of our constitution hath thought fit, that the representatives of the people should not have time to forget that they are such; that they are empowered to act for the people, not against them. In a word, our constitution means, that the members of this body should be kept, as it were, to

their good behaviour, by the frequent returns of new elections. It does all that a constitution can do, all that can be done by legal provisions, to secure the interests of the people, by maintaining the integrity of their trustees: and lest all this should fail, it gives frequent opportunities to the people to secure their interests themselves, by mending their choice of their trustees; so that as a bad king must stand in awe of an honest parliament, a corrupt house of commons must stand in awe of an honest people.

Between these two estates, or branches of the legislative power, there stands a third, the house of peers; which may seem in theory, perhaps, too much under the influence of the crown, to be a proper control upon it, because the sole right of creating peers resides in the crown; whereas the crown hath no right to intermeddle in the electing commoners. This would be the case, and an intolerable one indeed, if the crown should exercise this right often, as it hath been exercised sometimes with universal and most just disapprobation. It is possible too, that this may come to be the case in some future age, by the method of electing peers to sit in parliament for one part of the same kingdom, by the frequent translations of bishops, and by other means, if the wisdom and virtue of the present age, and the favourable opportunity of the present auspicious and indulgent reign do not prevent it. But in all other respects, the persons who are once created peers, and their posterity, according to

the scheme of the constitution, having a right to sit, and debate, and vote in the house of peers, which cannot be taken from them, except by forfeiture; all influence of the kind I have mentioned seems to be again removed, and their share in the government depending neither on the king nor the people, they constitute a middle order, and are properly mediators between the other two, in the eye of our constitution.

It is by this mixture of monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical power, blended together in one system, and by these three estates balancing one another, that our free constitution of government hath been preserved so long inviolate, or hath been brought back, after having suffered violations, to it's original principles, and been renewed, and improved too, by frequent and salutary revolutions. It is by this that weak and wicked princes have been opposed, restrained, reformed, punished by parliaments; that the real, and perhaps the doubtful, exorbitancies of parliaments have been reduced by the crown; and that the heat of one house hath been moderated, or the spirit raised, by the proceedings of the other. Parliaments have had a good effect on the people, by keeping them quiet; and the people on parliaments, by keeping them within bounds, which they were tempted to transgress. A just confidence in the safe, regular, parliamentary methods of redressing grievances hath often made the freest, and not the most patient people on Earth, bear the greatest grievances much longer

longer than people held under stronger restraints, and more used to oppression, who had not the same confidence, nor the same expectation, have borne even less. The cries of the people, and the terrour of approaching elections, have defeated the most dangerous projects for beggaring and enslaving the nation; and the majority without doors hath obliged the majority within doors to truckle to the minority. In a word, two things may be said with truth of our constitution, which I think neither can, nor ever could be said of any other. It secures society against the miseries which are inseparable from simple forms of government, and is liable as little as possible to the inconveniences that arise in mixed forms. It cannot become uneasy to the prince, or people, unless the former be egregiously weak or wicked; nor be destroyed, unless the latter be excessively and universally corrupt.—But these general assertions require to be a little better explained.

By simple forms of government, I mean such as lodge the whole supreme power, absolutely and without control, either in a single person, or in the principal persons of the community, or in the whole body of the people. Such governments are governments of arbitrary will, and therefore of all imaginable absurdities the most absurd. They stand in direct opposition to the sole motive of submission to any government whatsoever; for if men quit the state, and renounce the rights of nature, (one of which is, to be sure, that of being governed by their own will) they do this,

that they may not remain exposed to the arbitrary will of other men, the weakest to that of the strongest, the few to that of the many. Now, in submitting to any simple form of government whatever, they establish what they mean to avoid, and for fear of being exposed to arbitrary will sometimes, they choose to be governed by it always. These governments do not only degenerate into tyranny, they are tyranny in their very institution; and they who submit to them are slaves, not subjects, however the supreme power may be exercised; for tyranny and slavery do not so properly consist in the stripes that are given and received, as in the power of giving them at pleasure, and the necessity of receiving them whenever and for whatever they are inflicted. Absolute democracy may appear to some, in abstracted speculation, a less deviation from nature than monarchy, and more agreeable to reason, because here it is the will of the whole community, that governs the whole community, and becau sereason does certainly instruct every man, even from a consciousness of his own frailty, the impotentia animi of the Latin writers, to trust as little power as possible to any other man. But still it must be confessed, that, if it be unsafe for a people to trust too much power to a prince, it is unsafe for them likewise to keep too much power to themselves. Absolute monarchy is tyranny; but absolute democracy is tyranny and anarchy both. If aristocracy be placed between these two extremes, it is placed on a slippery ridge, and must fall into one or the other, according to the natural

course

course of human affairs; if the few who govern are united, into tyranny, perhaps, more severe than any other; if they are disunited, into factions and disorders as great as those of the most tumultuous democracy.

From such observations, and many of the same kind and tendency, it hath been concluded very reasonably, that the best form of government must be one compounded of these three, and in which they are all so tempered, that each may produce the good effects, and be restrained by the counterworkings of the other two, from producing the bad effects that are natural to it. Thus much is evident. But then how to fix that just proportion of each, how to hit that happy temperament of them all in one system, is a difficulty that hath perplexed the wisest politicians, and the most famous legislators. Let me quote one of the greatest writers of antiquity. Tacitus acknowledges, in the fourth book of his annals, what is here advanced; but he thinks such a constitution of government rather a subject of fine speculation than of practice. He thinks it much more likely, that such a system should continue to be admired and praised in idea, than established in fact; and if it happens ever to be established, he does not imagine it can be supported long *. Not only the real difficulties which his sagacity presented to his mind, but his reflections on the constitution and

* Cunctas nationes & urbes populus, aut primores, aut singuli regunt. Delecta ex his & constituta reipublicæ forma, laudari facilius quàm evenire; vel, si evênit, haud diuturna esse potest.

fate

fate of the Roman commonwealth, might lead Tacitus into this despondency. But what the refinements of Roman policy could not do, hath been done in this island, upon foundations laid by the rough simplicity of our northern ancestors.

It would be a curious and entertaining amusement, to reduce the constitutions of the Roman government, and of those which were formed on the ruins of that empire, particularly of our own, to their first principles; to observe in which they agree, and in which they differ, and the uniform or various tendencies of each; to mark the latent, as well as apparent causes of their rise and fall; how well or how ill they were contrived for triumphs abroad, or peace at home; for vain grandeur, or real prosperity; for resisting corruption, or being ruined by it. Such an analysis and inquiry would be, I imagine, not only amusing but useful. At least, it would be more so than any rhapsody of general reflections, huddled together with little order or design; for these leave no systematical impressions on the mind; nothing but a confusion of ideas, often bright and glittering, seldom instructive. But a work of this kind would be too voluminous and too aspiring for these little essays, and the humble author of them. He will therefore keep to his point, and content himself to make some of those observations alone, which seem proper to illustrate and prove what he hath advanced, that the British constitution is a plain and sufficient rule of judgment and conduct to us in every thing that regards our liberty; for preserving of which, as well as for securing it's

own

own duration, it is better fitted than any other.

There was so great a mixture of monarchical power in the Roman commonwealth, that Livy dates the original of liberty from the expulsion of the Tarquins, rather because the consular dignity was made annual, than because the regal power had suffered any diminution in that change*. The dictatorial power, the most absolute that can be imagined, was introduced in eight, or at farthest in eleven years afterward, and may therefore be reckoned coeval with the commonwealth; and whatever diminution either this or the consular power might suffer, the axes and the rods were terrible to the last, especially when they were carried before a dictator, for whom the tribunes of the people were not a match, as they were for the consuls. But though there were three sorts of power exercised, there were but two orders or estates established in this commonwealth, the patricians and the plebeians; and the supreme power was divided accordingly between the senate and the collective, not a representative, body of the people. These two orders or estates had frequent contests, and well they might, since they had very opposite interests. Agrarian laws, for instance, began to be promulgated within three and twenty years, and continued to the end of the commonwealth to produce the same dis-

* Libertatis originem inde magis, quia annuum imperium consulare factum est, quam quod diminutum quicquam sit ex regiâ potestate, numeres. Omnia jura, omnia insignia primi consules tenuere. Lib. 2, cap. 1.

orders

orders*. How inconsistent, indeed, was that plan of government, which required so much hard service of the people; and which, leaving them so much power in the distribution of power, left them so little property in the distribution of property? Such an inequality of property, and of the means of acquiring it, cannot subsist in an equal commonwealth; and I much apprehend, that any near approaches to a monopoly of property, would not be long endured even in a monarchy.—But I return to my first observation.

Though the Romans made frequent experience of the cruel mischiefs, and even extreme danger to liberty, which attended almost every variance of the two estates, yet did they never fall upon any safe or effectual method of preventing these disputes, or of reconciling them without violence. The old expedients alone subsisted; and surely they were not only violent, but extraconstitutional. When the senate was inflexible, the people had immediate recourse to sedition. When the people was refractory, the senate had recourse to a dictator. The latter had an approbation, which could not be given to the former, and was a legal institution; notwithstanding which I make no scruple of saying that it was at least as inconsistent, with a free constitution of government as the former. Sedition was temporary anarchy. A dictator was a tyrant for six months, unless he thought

* Tum primum lex agraria promulgata est; nunquam deinde usque ad hanc memoriam sine maximis motibus rerum agitata. Liv. l. 2, c. 41.

fit

fit to abdicate sooner. The constitution was suspended, and endangered by both. It might have been destroyed by the excesses of one. It was destroyed by the bare duration of the other. If the Romans had annually elected out of their tribes a certain number of men to represent the people, instead of depending on their tribunes; (a sort of bullying magistracy, and often a very corrupt one) and if this representative body had been one estate and had acted as such, the consuls might very well have supplied the place of a third estate, and have been safely trusted, even more independently of the senate than they were, with the executive power. But the want of a third estate in the Roman system of government, and of a representative body, to act for the collective body, maintained one perpetual ferment, which often increased into a storm, but never subsided into a calm. The state of Rome, and of the greatest men in that commonwealth, would have deserved pity rather than envy, even in the best times, if their defective constitution had not made such a state of trouble and tumult the price they paid for the maintenance of their liberty *. But this was not the whole price. While Rome advanced triumphantly in conquering the world, as her orators, poets, and historians, have expressed themselves; that is a few nations round the Mediterranean sea, and little more; her citi-

* Conciones magistratuum pæne pernoctantium in rostris.—Accusationes potentium reorum, & assignatæ etiam domibus inimicitiæ.——Procerum factiones, & assidua senatûs adversum plebem certamina.

Dial. de Orat. Quinctil. Tacito inscrip.

zens

zens turned against one another those weapons, which were put into their hands against the enemies of Rome. Mutual proscriptions and bloody massacres followed: each party triumphed in it's turn; they were more animated and better disciplined by their contests: both grew stronger; the commonwealth alone grew weaker; and Pompey and Cæsar finished the last tragical scene, which Marius and Sylla began. In fine, the Roman commonwealth would have been dissolved much sooner than it was, by the defects I have mentioned, which many circumstances concurred to aggravate, if such a spirit of wisdom, as well as courage, and such an enthusiasm for the grandeur, the majesty, and the duration of their empire had not possessed this people, as never possessed any other. When this spirit decayed, when this enthusiasm cooled, the constitution could not help, nay, worked against itself. That dictatorial power, on which the senate had always depended for preserving it, completed the ruin of it, in the hands of Cæsar; and that tribunitial power, to which the people had always trusted the defence of their liberty, confirmed their slavery in the hands of Augustus.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

THE defects, which I have presumed to censure in the Roman constitution of government, were avoided in some of those that were established on the breaking of that empire by the northern nations and the Goths; for I suspect that the Goths were not properly and strictly a northern nation, any more than the Huns and the Alans, though they have been often confounded, and I believe by myself.—Let us cast our eyes on Spain and France.

We cannot arrive, as far as my scanty knowledge informs me, at any particular and authentick account of the scheme of that government, which the western Goths established, when, driven out of Gaul by the Franks, they drove the Vandals and the Alans out of Spain; nor distinguish very accurately between such institutions as were parts of the original Gothic plan, and such as were introduced into the several kingdoms that formed themselves on the reconquest of the country by the Spaniards from the Arabs and Moors. The original of the cortes particularly is quite in the dark, as we are assured by a very industrious inquirer and judicious writer *. Thus much, however, we may assert, that the Gothic kings were at first elective, and always limited, even after they became hereditary; and that the cortes, whenever it was established, was an assembly,

* Dr. Geddes in his Miscell. Tracts.

that

that may be more truly compared to a British parliament, than the assembly of the states of France could ever pretend to be. Churchmen had wriggled themselves into a share of temporal power among the Goths, as they did in every country where they were admitted to preach the Gospel, though without any authority from the Gospel; so that the cortes consisted of prelates, as well as dukes, masters of orders, earls, and ricoshomes, who composed the whole body of the nobility; and of the procurators of the commons; that is, of the citizens and burgesses, chosen by the cities and boroughs to represent and act for the whole body of the commons. To preserve the independency of this assembly, these procurators were to be paid by the corporations for which they served; the king was to give no office or salary to any of them; nay, a "resumption of rewards, granted to members of the cortes*," was once at least debated, if not enacted. In short, he was not to name their president, nor even to send letters unopened to any of them. No money could be raised on the subjects without the consent of this assembly; and it was a standing maxim, or order, that redress of grievances should precede the grants of supplies. Such a frame of government as this seems built for duration; and, in fact, if it had not been undermined, it could not have been demolished. The manner in which it was both undermined, and demolished totally at last, deserves the attention of every man in Britain. It was undermined by

* Dr. Geddes in his Miscell. Tracts.

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the influence of the court, too much connived at and too long tolerated, on the members of the cortes. Prostitute wretches were found in those days, I doubt not, as well as in ours, to maintain that the necessary independency of the prince could not be supported, without allowing a corrupt dependency of the cortes on him; and they had in those days such success in Castile, as we ought to hope they will never obtain in Britain. When corrupt majorities were thus secured, pretensions were not wanting, nor will they ever be so, for making concessions to the crown, repugnant to the spirit of the constitution, and even inconsistent with the forms of it. Such pretences, however plausible, would not have been admitted by men zealous to preserve their liberty; because any real danger, remote as well as immediate, to a free constitution, would in their balance outweigh all considerations of real expediency, and much more all the frivolous pretences of that kind. But the members of the cortes were no longer such men, when Castile lost her liberties under Charles the fifth *. The custom of bribing the representatives of the commons, by gifts and promises, and so securing a majority to the court, had long prevailed, as we have just now said; and after that, it is not to be wondered at if excises, given for eight years only, became perpetual; if money was granted before grievances were redressed; and if the precedent set in the time of Henry the second was followed in all succeeding reigns. The cortes gave this prince a supply, for

* Dr. Geddes in his Miscell. Tracts.

making war on the Moors; but the sum being represented by the court to be insufficient for the service, it was carried, that, in case of a deficiency, the king might raise, without calling a cortes, the money necessary to make good that deficiency*. This vote of credit, gave an incurable fatal wound to that constitution. I call it a vote of credit, though the powers it gave seem to be less than those which are given by some modern votes of credit; for surely there is a difference, and not a small one, between a power to raise money directly on the people, for a service known, and already approved, and provided for in part, by their representatives, and a power to borrow money, on the national credit, for services unknown, and to lay the nation under an obligation of paying for that which it is possible their representatives may disapprove.

This precedent having been made in favour of one king, and in one particular conjuncture, it became a prevailing argument in favour of every other king, and in every other conjuncture: for though it may be, nay must be, in the vast variety of characters, and of conjunctures, prudent and just to grant in favour of some princes, and upon some occasions, what it would be neither prudent nor just to grant in favour of other princes, and upon other occasions, yet such is the merit of every prince who fills a throne, or rather such is the servile adulation paid to power, in what hands soever it be lodged, that general and almost universal experience shows this rule, which no man of sense would break in the management of his private

* Dr. Geddes in his Miscell. Tracts.

interests,

interests, absolutely reversed in the management of the most important national interests. The inference to be drawn from hence is plainly this, that the inconveniency or danger of refusing to every prince, and in every conjuncture, such things as are inconsistent with the constitution of a free government, must be always less than the inconveniency or danger of granting them to any prince, and in any conjuncture.

Let me add this farther observatioin which presents itself so naturally after the former. Though it be proper in all limited monarchies, to watch and guard against all concessions, or usurpations that may destroy the balance of power, on which the preservation of liberty depends; yet is it certain, that concessions to the crown from the other constituent parts of the legislature are almost alone to be feared. There is no danger that the crown should make them to the others; and on this head the people may very safely trust to those who wear it, and those who serve it. The nobility will not make them to the commons, without great struggles, which give time for interpositions, nor the commons to the nobility. But both may be easily induced to make them to the crown. The reasons of this difference are obvious enough; for, first, a king is really nothing more than a supreme magistrate, instituted for the service of the community, which requires that the executive power should be vested in a single person. He hath, indeed, a crown on his head, a sceptre in his hand, and velvet robes on his back,

and he sits elevated in a throne, while others stand on the ground about him; and all this to denote that he is a king, and to draw the attention and reverence of the vulgar. Just so another man wears a mitre on his head, a crosier in his hand, and lawn sleeves, and sits in a purple elbow chair, to denote that he is a bishop, and to excite the devotion of the multitude, who receive his benediction very thankfully on their knees. But still the king, as well as the bishop, holds an office, and owes a service. "Officium est imperare, non regnum." The king, when he commands, discharges a trust, and performs a duty, as well as the subject, when he obeys. Notwithstanding which, kings are apt to see themselves in another light, and experience shows us, that even they, who made them what they are, are apt to take them for what they are not. From hence it happened in Spain, and may happen possibly in other countries, that the kings, instead of being satisfied with, and thankful for the dignity, honour, power and wealth, which they possessed in so eminent a degree above all other magistrates and members of the commonwealth, repined at their being possessed of no more. What they had was given them by the constitution; and what they had not was reserved by the same authority to the nobility and to the commons. But they proceeded, and their sycophants reasoned, as if the sole power of the government, and the whole wealth of the nation, belonged of right to them, and the limitations of the monarchy were so many usurpations

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on the monarch.—In the second place, beside this constant desire of encroaching, there is another reason why concessions to the crown are more to be guarded against than others, in limited monarchies. The regal power resides in one person. The other shares of the supreme power are assigned to bodies of men. From hence it follows, that the interest of the king, and the interest of the crown, cannot well be divided in the mind of a prince; whereas the interest of each individual may be distinguished from the interest of the nobility or of the commons, and still more from that of the nation, in the minds of those who compose a house of peers, or who are representatives of the people. A king cannot be tempted to give up the interest of the crown, because he cannot give up this publick interest, without giving up his private interest; whereas the members of such assemblies may promote their private interest, by sacrificing to it that of the publick. Several other reasons might be insisted upon, to establish the truth of the observation we have made, and to show how unfairly they argue, who all along suppose, that the independency of the crown may as easily be lost, and the balance of power be destroyed on that side, by concessions from the prince, and usurpations on him, as the independency of the lords or commons may be lost, and the balance of power be destroyed on that side, by concessions to the prince, and by his usurpations. Such reasons, for instance, might be drawn from the difference of that influence which the crown hath on the other estates, and which the other estates have on

the crown; as well as from the difference of the pretences, which may be urged on behalf of the crown, or of the nobility, or commons, to obtain such concessions; for supposing them all coequal, as parts of the legislature, yet if it be considered, that the executive power is solely in the crown; that the disposition of publick money, as well as publick employments, is a part of this power; that this power is in continual exercise, and may immediately affect, more or less, at one time or at another, every particular man, peer as well as commoner; whereas the other powers are exercised occasionally, are continued or suspended in great measure, at the will of the prince, and are employed chiefly in matters of general, not particular concern; in fine, if it be considered farther, that the powers exercised by assemblies of peers and commoners, whether these assemblies be regarded as parts of the legislature, as the great councils of the nation, or as the judges and prosecutors of enormous offenders, are few and simple, directed to notorious purposes, conducted by rules always known, always the same, and always sufficient to these purposes: whereas the branches of executive power are numerous and complicated, the rules various, and the purposes often unknown, often contingent; so that it may become difficult to judge either of the utility of the purposes, or of the sufficiency of the powers: if all these things be considered, I say, we shall not be at a loss to determine on which side the danger to liberty, in a limited monarchy, lies; and whether concessions to the crown, in prejudice of the constitution, are

not

not more likely to be made, than concessions from it.

Happy had it been for the people of Castile if they had seen this danger in time, and had remedied, while the remedies were in their power, those defects in their constitution, whatever they were, which gave their kings by degrees such an influence over the cortes, as overturned at last the whole constitution, and gained to the German race, that began to reign in Charles the fifth, (for his father Philip is scarce to be reckoned) such an absolute power as the Gothic kings had never been able to obtain. Though Charles the fifth was a very able prince, yet the honour, for such it will be esteemed by some men, or more truly the infamy of enslaving Castile, must not be ascribed to his superiour capacity, nor to that of his ministers. Had he been the merest tool, a thing of straw, but something less than a scarecrow, and unable to protect the property of his subjects, he might still have taken their liberties from them in that conjuncture, as he did most effectually. Corruption was established; a majority of the cortes was bribed; the nobility was detached from the common interest by titles, places, pensions, and grants; and the clergy in general, for exceptions there were, took no farther share in it than their particular piques, or some indirect and fleeting considerations inspired them to take. The nation saw itself betrayed, and the commons protested loudly against the proceedings of their representatives. But this was the very point for which the enemies of the Castilian constitution waited; and

as soon as a pretence for employing force was given them, they muffled themselves up in that threadbare cloak of zeal for the government, and stabbed their country to the heart. An ordinance of the cortes had been made about a hundred years before, against increasing the standing forces of the kingdom to more than four thousand soldiers in garrisons, and fifteen hundred ginets. This ordinance had not been very well observed. The long wars with the Moors made armies often necessary, when there was no actual war. The danger of being invaded by the Moors, for every Moorish king was deemed a pretender to the throne, might serve to make them so represented; and when this reason failed intirely, as it did by the conquest of Granada, the last possession of these people in Spain, pretences for keeping armies on foot were still to be found. There were still Moorish factions; the new Christians were Moors in their hearts; among the old Christians there were several who favoured them; the people were not to be trusted with their own preservation. Chievres, the rapacious minister of Charles the fifth, and his journeymen, for so were those Spaniards called, according to Dr. Geddes, who did not care how much their country was plundered by foreigners, provided they shared the spoils; Chievres, I say, and his journeymen, a real faction, and perhaps not a great one, were the fast friends of the government. The rest of the nation were open or secret enemies. According to this excellent logick, the former were to be protected in blundering, for they were guilty of

of that too, as well as in plundering; and the latter were to be oppressed for complaining. The nation was sacrificed to a faction, and an excellent constitution destroyed, in favour of a profligate government. This destruction however would not have been so easily accomplished, nor would Castilians alone have enslaved Castile to a foreign race, after asserting their liberty so often and so boldly against princes of their own country, if two other circumstances had not concurred. Ferdinand had conquered Navarre, and a regular, disciplined army defended that conquest against the French. This army, which was at hand, marched into Castile, defeated the commons, and extinguished liberty in a country where it had been long declining. The nobility was detached from the commons by grants of land, among other considerations, as I said above; and the commons renewed their contest on this head, perhaps unjustly, to be sure very unseasonably. The commons, however, were justified for taking arms, in the opinion of the nobility, and even in that of Adrian, who governed during the absence of Charles, whose preceptor he had been; for this honest man, too honest to be long endured on the papal throne, where he was afterward placed, affirmed that all the troubles of Castile were caused by the king, and by his covetous and tyrannical ministers. The conduct of the commons, upon this great occasion, was in many instances rash and violent, as well as ill advised and weak. But they were tumultuous assemblies driven into despair; and the

and the nobility, who might have had great sway among them, and might have helped to regulate their fire, and to keep them sober, helped on the contrary to make them mad, either by neglecting them, or by taking part against them, till it was too late; and then complained of their being mad, with as ill a grace as the principal men of Rome, who helped to corrupt that people, complained of their corruption, and assigned it as a reason for depriving them of their liberty.

There cannot be a greater solecism in politicks than that of a nobility, under monarchical government, who suffer the liberty of the commons to be taken away. In aristocracies, the nobility get whatever the commons lose; but in monarchies, the crown alone is the gainer, and the certain consequence of their helping to enslave the commons must be that of being enslaved themselves at last. How, indeed, should it be otherwise, since the liberty of the commons cannot be taken away, unless the constitution be first broken; and since neither the peers, nor any one else, can hold their privileges or their properties, by a better tenure than that of arbitrary will, when the constitution is once broken? Was it possible to doubt of this truth, we might find the proof of it, without going out of the country where we are; I mean Spain. Among all the surprising phænomena which have appeared in the world of late years, there are none that have struck mankind with more astonishment, than those instances of persons raised to the highest posts of power, authority, and command,

command, nay to empire, who had not, either from their obscure birth, or their low talents, or their still lower habits, the least occasion even to dream of such elevation. Among other countries, Spain hath had her share of them; and the grandees, as they are pompously styled, the successors of those men, who thought to rise on the ruin of the commons of Castile; they, who have the vain honour of cocking their hats in the presence of their prince, have been seen to stand at awful distance, or approach with respectful cringe, in the presence of a parasite and buffoon.

I know full well, that in such governments as we speak of here it is both the duty and interest of the nobility, to oppose the excesses of the commons; but I know too that they have another duty, which they are not to leave undone; another point of interest, which they are not to neglect: and therefore I have spoken of this second estate in our government as of a middle order, that are properly mediators between the other two, in the eye of our constitution. While the peers maintain this character, they will be able to discharge this duty; but they would cease to be so, if it was possible they should ever become the tools of faction, or the vassals of a minister. In mediations of this kind, different from those that are more commonly called such, mediators mingle in the contest, are parties concerned, and can by that alone expect to mediate with effect, whether they be considered as bodies of men, or individuals. When the commons are assisted by the peers in their

their reasonable endeavours to promote or restore frugality, to secure liberty, and to correct all sorts of maleadministration; the peers will have, both collectively and separately, a credit with the people as well as with the representatives of the people; by which they may contribute to check the latter, whenever a house of commons shall grow unreasonable, factious, or seditious. But if the peers of the realm neglect, or oppose the commons in their just attempts, and forfeit by consequence the character of impartiality, and even the air of independency, the peers will then add little strength to the crown, whenever the evil day comes, and have as little power to prevent it from coming. There was a time, our fathers saw it, when a house of commons destroyed, instead of supporting, the constitution, and introduced tyranny, under pretence of excluding slavery. I think it might be shown, from the anecdotes of that age, that this could not have happened, if the court had not been so long and so partially abetted by the greatest part of the nobility and clergy, both in the house of lords and out of it. A universal and timely concurrence with the spirit of the commons, which was pious in the true sense of the word at first, would have had, I presume, the full effect that every honest man proposed in a parliamentary reformation of the state; and those fatal opportunities, that were afterward given to the republican, presbyterian, and independent factions, would have been avoided. But they who could have trimmed,

trimmed, (for there is a wise and honest, as well as a silly and corrupt trimming) or have mediated with success, lost the power of doing either; some by abetting the crown so long, for fear of the commons, and others by concurring with the commons so far, for fear of the crown, that the people in general had no confidence in the former, and that the latter were afraid to trust their prince after all they had done against him. If any men had trusted to the plausible professions of the court at that time, and the court had subdued the opposite party, we may judge, without any breach of charity, that these men would have found themselves deceived. Just so, if any men who meant the reformation, not the destruction of the state, believed in the canting reformers of that age, such men were no doubt egregiously deceived. But I confess myself of opinion, and surely upon no improbable grounds, that there were few, or no such men. The good intentions of the court were distrusted even by those who took arms for the king; and the ill intentions of many of the leaders on the other side were suspected, no doubt, by many who took arms for the parliament. But two of the three estates being ripe for the rashest enterprises, and the third being in no condition to mediate, the extremes clashed, without any power sufficient to interpose; and when the sword was drawn, the sword could alone decide. I conclude therefore, from these two examples, that as there cannot be a greater errour in politicks than that of a nobility, who

who assist a prince to take away the liberties and privileges of the commons, which was the case in Castile, so the surest way of preventing that terrible dilemma, wherein men are obliged to choose either submission to tyrannical government, or concurrence with an enraged and no longer governable people, which hath been the case in Castile and Britain both, is for the nobility, and the principal men among the commons, to engage so early in the cause of liberty, that the former may be always in condition to mediate with effect, and the latter have always power to allay the intemperate heat of their own body.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XV.

SIR,

But to resume the comparison of other constitutions of government with our own, I say, that if the Gothic constitution in Spain, either by original defects, or by deviating from, and not being reduced again in time to it's first principles, was destroyed through the corruption of parliaments, and by the force of an army, one of which betrayed, and the other conquered the commons of Castile; the commons of France seem either not to have had, or to have lost, in the dark beginnings of that monarchy, all share in the supreme, legislative

tive power. The great, original defect of having but two estates to share the supreme power is an objection common to the Roman, and to the French constitutions, with this difference; of the three simple forms of government, the monarchical, the aristocratical, and the democratical, Rome wanted the first, and France hath always wanted the last. Rome had a nobility and a commonalty, but no magistracy fitted by it's institution to answer the purposes of that supreme magistrate, who is called king even in limited monarchies. France hath always had a king and a nobility, and hath felt in their turns all the evils of monarchical and aristocratical tyranny. But the people have not had, I presume, since the government of the Franks was fully established on this side of the Rhine, and the form of their monarchy settled, any share in the supreme power, either collectively or representatively, how much soever a contrary notion may have been countenanced by some writers, and have been generally entertained, at least in other countries.

There is no nation in the world, says Mezerai, more illustrious, nor any whose original is more obscure than that of the French. They who would dispute the first, could hardly dispute the last; and it is no business of mine to controvert either. As dark as their original is, we may discover enough to establish what hath been said, and to carry on the comparison we are making.

The Franks were a nation of Germany, seated at one time between the Elbe, Rhine, and Neckar, and

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at another, that is, in the reign of Theodosius the younger, extending themselves on the German side of the Rhine, from Cologne down to Nimighen, and still lower. What is known therefore of the government of the ancient Germans, either from Tacitus, or any other good authority, may be properly applied to their government, while they continued in Germany, and even after they settled in Gaul, till such times as we find, by relations more modern, that a different form of government prevailed among them. Now it seems to me extremely plain, that a different form of government did prevail among them even from the time of Clovis, the conqueror of Gaul. Thus, for instance, that passage in Tacitus, where he says, "that the "ancient Germans took their kings on account of "nobility, and their generals on account of valour; "that the power of their kings was not absolute "and unlimited; and that their generals command-"ed by the authority which their example, rather "than their power gave them *;" that passage, I say, is properly enough applied to the Franks before, and perhaps during the conquest of Gaul; but very improperly afterward, when Clovis, both king and general of that people, had founded the monarchy which he transmitted to his posterity†. That the nation of the Franks was divided into several tribes, or clans, and that these were go-

* Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt; nec regibus infinita, nec liberæ potestas; & duces exemplo potius quam imperio præsunt. De Mor. Germ.

† Boulainv. Mem. Hist.

verned

verned by several little princes, cannot be doubted.—"Habebat quot pagos, tot pæne duces." That a general was chosen to command the whole with sovereign authority, but according to certain rules made by common consent, whenever any great enterprise was undertaken, and that Clovis himself, though he succeeded his father Childeric in commanding over a part of the Franks, was chosen in this manner, and for this purpose, is certain. In his first expedition, he led an army of freebooters, and was obliged by compact to divide the spoil by lots among them. The story which so many authors have told, after Gregory of Tours, of a private soldier, who refused to leave to his disposition a vessel of gold, that had been taken out of a church at Rheims, and broke it before his face, is a proof that he was nothing more at first than I have represented him, the head of a troop of adventurers who chose him to lead them, but made their conditions with him. The Franks therefore might be at this time, in some sense, "all free, perfectly equal, and independent*;" but will it follow from hence that they continued to be so, in any sense, after Clovis had founded their monarchy; had destroyed all their little kings united in one body, and under his own domination, all their little states, and changed the form of their government, by appointing dukes, earls, vicars, and other magistrates, to govern under him, according to the model of government in the latter Roman empire? Certainly not. However this

* Boulainv. Mém. Hist.

change was brought about, and to whatever it was owing, the monarchy of the Franks in Gaul was built on the ruins of their former government. This Boulainvilliers himself confesses, when he says, (though not very accurately nor consistently, as I imagine, in calling their former government a kind of aristocracy) that "the principle of union, which founded the monarchy on the ruins of a kind of aristocracy, was the mistaken ambition of particular men." In short, proofs enough may be collected out of this very author, to show that the government of the Franks, even under the first race of their kings, was not only different from the German governments, but in some respects founded on quite opposite principles. One of these respects, which is immediately to my purpose, I shall mention.

The general assemblies that were held at first in the month of March, and afterward in the month of May, were national assemblies, indeed, but not such as the ancient Germans held; among whom the principal men consulted and decided about the least, and the whole body of the people about the greatest affairs *. In these assemblies of the French the people had nothing to do, unless we reckon for something the function of hollaing, which the author I have just now quoted assigns them, and which he says that custom had rendered necessary†. In one word, the people had not

* De minoribus principes, de majoribus omnes. Tacit.

† Ills (that is the French) laisserent passer aux hauts magistrats, les ducs, les comtes, & les vicaires, la droit de la nation entière;

not any share in the supreme power, either collectively or representatively, in the original plan of the French government. Whether they acquired any share in this power afterward, let us inquire next. Mezerai pretends *, and indeed the whole history of France vouches for him, "that no nation ever honoured their nobility "so much as the French; among whom the no- "bility was not only exempt from all sorts of im- "positions and charges, but commanded abso- "lutely all inferiour ranks, who were almost in "a state of servitude †." How could it be otherwise when the nobility, and chief magistrates, and the clergy, composed alone the national councils or parliaments, and even exercised distributive justice all over the kingdom? Their power increased, as that of the kings of the first race diminished. Charles Martel, indeed, who trusted to that battle-axe which gave him his name, and to foreign troops, laid aside the national assemblies, neglected the nobility, and misused even the clergy, who damned him for it. But Pepin found it necessary to regain both, and attach them to his interest, in order to mount the throne. By attaching them, he attached the whole nation to him.

entière; de sortque le commun n'eut plus d'autres fonctions dans les assemblées réelles, que d'y paroître pours les acclamations, que l'usage rendoit nécessaries. Boul. Mém. Hist.

* L. 2. † Jamais nation n'honora tant la noblesse que celle-là; car non seulement elle étoit exempte de toute sorte d'impôts, et corvées, mais commandoit à baguette à ses inférieurs, sur lesquels elle avoit presque droit de servitude.

Childeric was deposed, and he chosen king in a general assembly held at Soissons, which Mezerai calls most improperly, since the expression communicates a false idea to his reader, the states, "les etats." These assemblies, in his time, in that of his son Charles the great, and so on, consisted of the nobility and clergy, alone; and once more it is beyond all dispute certain, that the people had no more share in these national councils, under the second, than under the first race of the kings of France.

When the third race of these kings began in Hugues Capet, the lords were so powerful in their estates, and so independent in their governments, that he was forced to come to a kind of composition with them. They became sovereigns each in his territory, but held of the crown, and acknowledged the king for the supreme lord. There was scarce a town which had not a little sovereign, scarce a castle without some little tyrant. The parliaments, in these ages, took several turns; "Ills prirent divers plis," as Pasquier expresses himself *; but still they consisted of princes, great lords, bishops and abbots, who decided in them their disputes with one another, and with the king, and maintained by these means a sort of national confederacy, or federal union of many states, politically united under one head. Such assemblies as these, under the second and third race, were the original institutions, from whence the parliaments of France have pro-

* Recherches de la France.

ceeded,

ceeded, as many alterations as they have received; and as much as they are now changed *: so that we may safely affirm the parliaments of France never gave the people any share in the government of that kingdom; and who ever entertains a notion that the assemblies of the states did, or that these assemblies are of great antiquity, or that they are the foundation of the liberty of the people of that country, will find himself, on due examination, grossly deceived †.

These assemblies of the three estates, the nobility, clergy and commons, were invented first by Philip le Bel ‡. They were intirely unknown before the year 1301. The people had no right to any such assemblies; and when they were instituted, they were plainly designed for nothing less than the good of the people. Long after the establishment of the Capetian race, when taxes grew heavy, and were laid on and levied very arbitrarily §, seditions and rebellions of an oppressed people, who had no other resource, followed. To prevent these, not only writs or orders were sent to the nobility and clergy in the several sheriffwicks and bailiwicks, but to the commons, to assemble and take into consideration how to redress grievances, and support the publick expenses; and after such consideration

* Primitive origine & institution des parlemens. Recherches de la France. † Ib.

‡ L'assemblée des états.——fut une idée toute nouvelle de Philippe le Bel, & jusqu' alors entièrement inusitée. Boulainv. Let. sur les anciens Parl. de France.

§ Pasqu. Rech.

had among themselves, to depute some persons of each order, or estate, to confer together in the place appointed for holding such general assemblies. "The commons were added to these "assemblies," says Pasquier, "against the ancient "order or practice of France, for no other reason "than this, that the principal burden, or charge, "was to fall upon them *." This was the true reason. Redress of grievances had no part in the schemes of that rapacious and profuse prince, who was the author of this institution; and he that considers the manner in which these assemblies were convened, the powers they were suffered to exercise, the subordination in which the commons particularly were kept, and the habitual, unavoidable influence under which they lay, will be easily convinced, that such assemblies were fitted to do the jobs and sanctify the iniquity of the court, and nothing more. If at any time they make any good ordinances for the reformation of the state, "these ordinances are," says honest Pasquier, "like fine pieces of tapestry, hung up to "make a show to posterity." They have no other effect. "But the imposition granted to the "king hath it's full effect†." I conclude therefore, and upon sufficient grounds, that even since the establishment of these assemblies of the estates, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the people of France have had no real share in the

* Le roturier fut exprès ajouté, contre l'ancien ordre de la France, à cette assemblée, &c.

† ——Ces sont belles tapisseries, qui servent seulement de parade à une postérité. Cependant l'impost que l'on accorde au roy est fort bien mis à effet.

supreme

supreme power of the government, either collectively or representatively.

I might illustrate and prove what is here advanced, by the example of every assembly of the states of France, of which we have any good accounts, from the first in 1301 to the last, that was held, as I remember, in 1614. But such a deduction would carry us too far. I shall content myself therefore with making two observations.

First, that these farces, for such these assemblies were, and such they were designed to be, owe their institution not only to one of the worst kings, but to one of the worst ministers, that France ever saw, Enguerand de Marigny, who was called the coadjutor and the governor of the kingdom; the most insolent, the most avaricious, and the most prodigal man of his age. The great ability of this minister, on which his whole merit with a greedy master was raised, consisted in making his administration a system of violence and fraud, in order to plunder and enslave the people. When he durst not employ one, he turned himself to the other; and how grossly and impudently he managed even fraud, it may not be improper to take notice, in one instance, because we shall see the better, by this instance, what the nature and effect of these assemblies were, of which we speak, and what use the court made of them from their first institution. Enguerand de Marigny then meeting with great opposition to some taxes he had devised, proposed the calling an assembly of the states, and hoped probably that he might gain the commons to favour the intention he had of

extending these taxes to the nobility and clergy*, A great scaffold was erected. The king, the lords, and the clergy took their places on it. The commons attended at the foot of it. The minister made a most vehement declamation, to stir the passions of the audience, and made no scruple of insinuating in it, what neither he nor his master intended to perform, a promise of reimbursing, after the expedition proposed, what the people should give to the king. The king rose from his throne, and advanced to the extremity of the scaffold, that he might second by his looks the harangue of his treasurer, and see who those were that refused or consented to the aid he demanded. The deputies of Paris promised to give a sufficient supply, or to follow the king in their persons to the war. The other deputies concurred in this general engagement, and the assembly broke up without any farther deliberation, or any ordinance of the estates. But an ordinance of the king soon followed; a general excise was imposed by his authority, as if it had been the grant of the estates to him; and his minister had a number of harpies ready, whom he let loose to desolate the kingdom, by levying this infamous tax, for the consideration of some little advance made to the king†. If you ask what were the consequences of these proceedings, it will be sufficient to mention two. The tax of a fifth on the revenues of

* Boulainv. Let. sur les anciens Parl. de France.

† ——— Six deniers par livre de toutes les merchandises, victuailles, boissons, & denrées, —— vendües dans le royaume. Boulainv. Let. sur les anciens Parl. de France.

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the subject, which is the proportion of our land-tax of four shillings in the pound, was continued, though the general excise had been imposed; and Enguerand de Marigny was hanged in the succeeding reign for this among other crimes *, though not by an assembly of the estates; for the estates had neither the opportunity nor the power of resenting the greatest insult that could be offered them, and the greatest injury that could be done to the nation.

The next observation I have to make is very short, but I think very pertinent, and very important. ——This example shows us clearly how true it is, that no instruments of tyranny can be found so sure and effectual as the assembly of the estates of a realm, when such an assembly is so constituted as to want the power, which was from the first the case of the three estates in France, and the same must happen when they are so managed as to want the will, which became at last the case of the cortes in Spain, to secure the liberty and defend the property of the people, against such kings as Philip le Bel, and such coadjutors as Marigny. This prince and his minister had strained prerogative to the utmost, and had governed by it very tyrannically. While this expedient would do, they tried no other; but when they apprehended it might fail them, they added a deputation of the commons to the assembly of the estates; that, seeming to create a new control on the crown,

* Mezerai, Daniel, &c. Sous Louis Hutin.

they

they might in reality give greater scope and freer exercise to arbitrary will. The friends of liberty therefore, who live under limited monarchies, cannot be too careful to preserve their constitution in vigour, nor too fearful lest their representatives should be so influenced, as to neglect their privileges, misapply their powers, and depart from their integrity; since these friends of liberty see that the greatest masters of tyranny have judged the form, without the spirit, of a free government, more favourable to their schemes of oppression, than all the authority that absolute monarchy can give; and that they made an innovation in the form of their government on this very motive, and for this very purpose.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XVI.

SIR,

I HAVE dwelt long, perhaps too long, on the last head. I was induced to it, not only because the account I have given, according to the truth of history, is contrary to the national prejudices of many people on this subject, as I hinted before; but principally because the great point of strength and security, on which the freedom of our constitution rests, will appear in a fuller light, by being thus contrasted with the constitution of the French government. Both their ancestors and ours came out of Germany, and had probably much the same manners, the same customs, and the same forms of government. But as they proceeded differently in the conquests they made, so did they in the establishments that followed. The conquest of Britain was a work of time, and the Saxon monarchy was long in forming. The conquest of Gaul was carried on with greater rapidity, and the French monarchy was sooner formed. From hence some reasons might be drawn to account, among others, for that great difference between the constitutions of the two monarchies, which these two German nations founded at no great distance of time, in Britain and in Gaul. But I shall not indulge myself in guessing at the reasons, or accidents, that determined the Franks to the division they made of their people, and to the form of government they established.

Whatever

Whatever reasons or accidents determined them, this is certain, that the distinction of lord and vassal became the general distinction of the whole nation: that the commons among them were little better than ſlaves, whatever they had been in Germany; and that they were so inured to ſervitude under their kings, prelates, and lords, that they looked on themſelves at last, not juſtly but unjuſtly, as men who had no right, no, not even a right by nature, to any ſhare in the government of that community whereof they made ſo vaſtly the principal part*.

In Britain another conſtitution was formed, and another ſpirit prevailed. The Saxons had a nobility too†, ariſing from perſonal valour, or wiſdom, continued by blood, and ſometimes conferred by the prince, however legally at firſt it matters not to inquire, on ſuch as held great offices about his perſon. All theſe were the adelings, or nobles, a handful in comparison of the frilingi, or free-born, who made the body of the Saxon people. The freedom of this people was erected on two columns, that have proved more durable than braſs. They were parties to the making, and to the executing all the general laws of the kingdom. They ſhared the legiſlative power; were joined to the lords in the admini-

* Le peuple, d'un autre côté, ſe fait juſtice, reconnoiſſant combien la condition naturelle le doit éloigner du concours du gouvernement, & dans ce ſentiment ne ſe fait entendre que par requête. Boulainv. Let. ſur les an. Parl.

† Nat. Bacon. Hiſt. & Pol. Diſ.

ſtration

stration of justice; and no magistrate, or officer, could exercise jurisdiction, nor authority over them, no not ecclesiastical, without their consent and election. The comites ex plebe, who were chosen for this last function, the administration of justice, made one rank among the Saxon commonalty. The custodes pagani, such as had a helmet, a coat of mail, and a gilt sword, for their ordinary arms, whether they fought on foot, or on horseback, made another rank; and the plain pagani, or ceorles, made the lowest. But even these were totally distinct from, and far superiour to the lazzi, or slaves, nay to the free lazzi, such as had been slaves, and were become free. The ceorles were freemen to all intents and purposes, and in all the essentials of liberty, as much as the Saxons of any superiour rank, and were capable of rising to any superiour rank by merit, or by favour.

These are the sources, from which all the distinction of rank and degree, that exist at this day among us, have flowed. These are the general principles of all our liberties. That this Saxon constitution hath varied in many particulars, and at several periods of time, I am far from denying. That it did so, for instance, on the entry of the Normans, though certainly not near so much as many have been willing to believe, and to make others believe, is allowed. Nay, let it be allowed for argument's sake, and not otherwise, that during the first confusion, and the subsequent disorders which necessarily accompany and follow

so great and so violent a revolution, the scheme of the Saxon constitution was broken, and the liberties of the people invaded, as well as the crown usurped. Let us even agree, that laws were made without the consent of the people; that officers and magistrates, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, were imposed without their election: in one word, that these Norman kings, and the lords, had mounted each other too high to be lords over freemen, and that the government was entirely monarchical and aristocratical, without any exercise of democratical power. Let all this be granted, and the utmost that can be made of it will amount to this, that confusion and violence at the entry, and for some time after, under the government of a foreign race, introduced many illegal practices, and some foreign principles of policy, contrary to the spirit, and letter too, of the ancient constitution; and that these kings and the lords "abused their power over the freemen, by "extortion and oppression, as lords over tenants." But it will remain true, that neither kings nor lords, nor both together, "could prevail over "them, or gain their consent to give their right, "or the law, up to the king's beck. But still the "law remained arbiter both of king and people, "and the parliament supreme expounder and "judge both of it and them*." Though the branches were lopped, and the tree lost it's beauty for a time, yet the root remained untouched, was set

* Nat. Bacon. Summary Conclus. of the first part of Hist. and Pol. Disc.

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in a good soil, and had taken strong hold in it: so that care, and culture, and time were indeed required, and our ancestors were forced to water it, if I may use such an expression, with their blood; but with this care, and culture, and time, and blood, it shot up again with greater strength than ever, that we might sit quiet and happy under the shade of it; for if the same form was not exactly restored in every part, a tree of the same kind, and as beautiful, and as luxuriant as the former, grew up from the same root.

To bring our discourse to that point which is here immediately concerned, parliaments were never interrupted, nor the right of any estate taken away, however the exercise of it might be disturbed. Nay, they soon took the forms they still preserve, were constituted almost as they now are, and were entirely built on the same general principles, as well as directed to the same purposes.

When I say that they were constituted almost as they now are, I do not mean to enter into any of those minute questions, about which a man may employ much time and study, and have as little true and useful knowledge of our constitution as the most ignorant man alive. But I propose to make a short reflection or two on the property and power of the three estates that compose our parliament, as they stood formerly, and as they now stand; because although our parliaments were composed of king, lords, and commons in those days, as well as these, yet the difference of the weight

weight which each of these estates hath cast into the scale of government, at different periods, does in effect make some difference in the constitution of parliaments: and by considering this difference, our thoughts will be led the better to judge of the true poise of our constitution, on maintaining which our all depends; since the nearer we keep to it, the safer our liberty is, and since every variation from it is dangerous to our liberty, in a degree proportionable to such variation. Property then, and power by consequence, have changed hands, or rather have shifted much in the same hands since the Norman æra. Kings, lords, and the church were in those days, and long afterward, the great proprietors; and by the nature of tenures, as well as by the bulk of their estates, they held the commons in no small subjection, and seem to have governed without much regard to them, or to their concurrence, in many cases. But the regard that was not paid them at first, the kings, the lords, and the church found it necessary to pay them in a short time; and that authority, that weight in the balance of power, which property did not give them, they soon acquired, or rather resumed by their numbers and by the circumstances that followed. By the circumstances that followed, I mean the great disorders in the state, and the civil wars, which the ambition of princes, of the nobility, and of the church too, created. In all these conflicts, some of the commons "holding for the king, who promised liberty from "the lords, and others siding with the lords, who promised

" promised them liberty from the king *," they came off better in the end than their principals, and an example rarely to be parallelled was set; for general liberty was nursed by these means under the wings of particular ambition. In latter days, when the nation, harrassed and spent by the long wars of York and Lancaster, seemed glad to settle under any stable government; and in this temper gave many advantages to the cunning of Henry the seventh, which the violence of his son improved; it is certain that the commons suffered extremely from the avarice of one, the profusion of the other, and the high-strained prerogative of both. But then their sufferings were temporary, and may be said to have ended with these reigns: whereas the sufferings of the nobility and the church were permanent and irretrievable. "The "king and his council," says the author I quoted last, "under colour of liveries and retainders, "brought the whole kingdom to be of their li- "very." It was so. But still the commons lost nothing, and gained much. They were more under subjection to the crown; but they were less under subjection to the lords and the church. Not only the dependencies on these were broken, but the lords and the church, were made more dependent on the crown than the commons had been on them. The lords were obliged to attend the court, at their own expense, and might alienate their estates to defray this expense. A great part of the lands of the church were confiscated and parcelled out

* Nat. Bacon Hist. and Pol. Disc. conclus. of the 2d part.

to those who could buy, at very cheap rates; and the increase of trade, which begun about this time to be very considerable, put the commons into a condition of being the buyers. Thus were the old foundations of property and power sapped on one side, and new foundations laid on the other. Some of the weight of the church continued in the scale of the lords, and some of it hath gone since into that of the commons. The parliamentary control of the crown did not become less, but it became more equally and more usefully placed. Democracy was so well poised with aristocracy, after this great change, that if they divided, they could not invade one another; and if they united, they could not be invaded by the monarchy. Far different was the case in other countries, where the crown got the better of the lords, and baffled, at least in some degree, the monstrous attempts of ecclesiastical usurpation. In France, for instance, when the incroachments of the papal power where checked, the church compounded with the crown, and an alliance succeeded, of the monarchy with the hierarchy. But if the church was able to compound, the nobility was forced to submit in that kingdom: so that the authority and wealth of the church being fixed on the side of the crown, the whole strength and influence of the nobility being taken from them, and incorporated with the power of the crown, and the commons having nothing to do in that government but to pay taxes, and carry arms, the kings of France are become absolute monarchs; and whatever liberty, or appearance of liberty

liberty, there was in that constitution, it is totally destroyed.

When I say that parliaments were entirely built on the same general principles, as well as directed to the same purposes, as they still are, I shall be justified by the whole tenour of our history, and our law. Let us consider this in a case the plainest imaginable, though it suffers so much debate through the effronetry of some men. Let us consider it relatively to that great principle, that parliaments ought to be independent of the crown, in all respects, except such as are settled by the law and custom of parliament, and concerning which there is no dispute. Now, this general principle hath not only been always the same, but it hath been always so declared, in the most authentick and solemn manner; and parliaments have not been more intent on any national concern whatever, than on maintaining this principle, and securing the effects of it. I say, parliaments have been constantly thus intent, and especially in the best times, during more than three centuries at least; for I would not go back too far, nor grope unnecessarily in the dark. What else did those laws mean, that were made in the time of the Lancaster kings, to regulate the elections, and to prevent the influence, which Richard the second had illegally and arbitrarily employed, and which there was room to fear that other princes might employ? What else do all those resolutions, all those declarations, those remonstrances, all those acts of parliament mean that have been made

so often, and enforced so strongly, from time to time, and from those days to these, against the influence of the crown, either on the elections, or on the members of parliament? I should be ashamed to ask many questions of this kind, or to descend into any detail, in order to prove what every clerk of a justice of peace, nay, almost every day-labourer, knows. But there is another question, which I must ask. If this be so, what do these men mean who are employed, or rather, what does he mean who employs them, to plead in all places, and on all occasions, even the most solemn, in favour of this very influence, nay, of the very worst sort of it, of that influence which is created immediately by corruption; for to that their arguments reach by undeniable consequences? Reason is against him and them; since it is a plain absurdity to suppose a control on the crown, (and they have not yet ventured to suppose the contrary, that I know of) and to establish, at the same time a power, and even a right, in the crown, to render this control useless. Experience is against them; since the examples of other countries, and at some times (former times I mean) of our own, have proved, that a prince may govern according to his arbitrary will, or that of his more arbitrary minister, as absolute and much more securely with, than without the concurrence of a parliament. Authority, even the uniform authority of our whole legislature, is against them. The voice of our law gives them the lie. How then shall we account for this proceeding;

ing; this open and desperate attack upon our constitution, and therefore upon our liberty? Have these great men made any nice discovery, that escaped the blunt sagacity of our ancestors formerly, and is above the narrow conceptions of all other men, except themselves, at this time? Is it less fit than the wisdom of this nation hath judged it to be, for so many ages, that kings should govern under the constitutional control of two other estates? Or is it less fit that they should govern so, for the time to come, than it was for the time past? We shall hear, for aught I know, even in this age, that kings are God's vicegerents; that they are, next to him and his son Christ Jesus, supreme moderators and governors. We shal hear again, perhaps, of their hereditary, their divine, their indefeisible right, and the rest of that silly cant, which was invented to make the usurpations of prerogative go down the better. But will even this alter the case? Will this make it unworthy of them to submit to the full control of such a constitution as God himself approved, in the institution of the Jewish senate? Moses was undoubtedly God's vicegerent. He was, if ever man was so, next and immediately under God, a supreme moderator and governor. He was inspired, and assisted in a supernatural manner: and yet he took the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian*. He associated to himself in the government of the commonwealth, or he bad the people take as he says in another place †, or choose, "wise men and understanding, and known

* Exod. xviii. † Deut. i.

"among the tribes," that they might be associated to him. He found himself unequal to the task of governing alone, and he expostulated with God upon it. "I am not able to bear all this people "alone. Have I conceived all this people? Have "I begotten them? If thou deal thus with me, "kill me, I pray thee, out of hand*." Whether they who deduce from hence the institution of sanhedrins, are in the right, or they who assign them a more modern date, against the opinion of the Jewish doctors themselves, whose authority our doctors receive implicitly enough in some cases, and reject as arbitrarily in others, it matters not to inquire. Let us leave the dispute to the partisans of Joseph Scaliger and Petavius, of father Simon and le Clerc. Thus much is certain. A great sanhedrin subsisted at Jerusalem, even at the coming of the Messiah, as well as inferiour sanhedrins in several parts of Palestine; which form of government bore some resemblance to our old Saxon constitution; and he who takes the trouble of looking into Mr. Selden†, will find that the great sanhedrin had as much authority and exercised as much power, as ever parliaments did, or wittenagemots could claim. That God approved a kind of parliamentary establishment and a division of the supreme power between his vicegerent Moses and the seventy elders, to whom he gave some of the spirit that was on Moses, the quotations I refer to from holy writ do sufficiently prove. After this, it cannot be

* Numb. xi.

† Seld. de Syned. et Præf. Jurid. vet. Hebræorum.

said, I think, to derogate from the majesty of any prince, let us entertain as high notions of this majesty as we please, that he is relieved from the burden of governing alone; that he is obliged to share the supreme power with the nobility and commonalty of the realm; and that he is hindered from destroying, either directly or indirectly, that independency of those other estates, which can alone preserve this division of the supreme power really, as well as apparently. But perhaps these great and honest men have discovered a necessity of putting the members, or a majority of the members of parliament, under the influence of the crown, in order to preserve this very constitution. Let us see therefore what dangers this expedient is fitted to prevent.—Are we afraid that a house of commons, unless restrained by places and pensions, should give up the constitution to the lords, and establish an aristocracy? This fear would be ridiculous surely; and he who should argue against such a supposition, would make himself so. Are we afraid that a house of commons, unless restrained in this manner, should usurp more power than belongs to them, and establish a kind of democratical tyranny? But they would have, in opposition to them, a power sufficient to defeat their designs; the united power of the crown, and of the house of lords. Formerly, indeed, they succeeded in an attempt of this kind; and the king and the lords may, at any time, throw too much power into their scale, and set the sense and spirit of the people on their side, as was done at that time. But this neither hath been, nor can be done, unless

both king and lords conduct themselves so ill, that the mischiefs to be apprehended from their prevalency appear as great, or greater, than those which are to be apprehended from the prevalency of the commons. Let it be remembered too, that as the king and lords may give too much power and popularity to the commons, so the lords and commons may give too much power to the crown. The difference will lie only here; that the king and lords will never do the first designedly; whereas there is a possibility, that the lords and commons may be induced, in some age less virtuous than the present, by places, pensions, and other gratifications, bestowed on a majority of those assemblies, to do the last designedly. What now remains to be urged, in favour of this expedient? From what danger are we to be protected by it? Shall we be told that parliaments will not pursue the national interest, unless their members are bought into it by the crown? Something like this hath been advanced, I have heard; and nothing more impudent, nor more silly could be advanced. A court that is truly in the interest of the nation will have, nay, must have a concurrence of parliament, as it would be easy, if it was needful, to show. Time and trouble, indeed, may be sometimes required to lead independent men, who judge for themselves, and comply because they are convinced; whereas neither one nor the other are wanting, to determine such as hold to a court by a corrupt dependency on it: for they are soon disciplined, and ready to perform the whole exercise of parliamentary mercenaries at

at the beat of a drum. Some inconveniencies may likewise arise, for that which I have just mentioned does not deserve the name, from the independency of parliaments. Ministers, for instance, may be called to account by the passion, by the prejudice, if you will, of such assemblies, oftner, perhaps, than they deserve to be; or their errours may be censured, or their faults be punished, in a greater degree, and with more rigour, not only than true political justice requires, which should always be tempered with mercy, but even than strict justice exacts. But as one of these is a fault, if it be a fault, on the best side, and as the other will certainly happen very seldom, it does not seem reasonable, that a door should be opened to corruption and dependency, in order to prevent them. Nay, farther, this vigilance, and this severity of parliaments, which we here suppose, will not fail to have some very good effects, that are more than sufficient to balance the supposed ill effects. Among the rest, they may render the rash, who are in power, more cautious, and the bold more modest. They may render fools less fond of power, and awe even knaves into honesty. It were better, surely, that able and good men should now and then suffer, nay, the good man who suffered would be himself of this opinion, than that the adulation and servility of parliaments, which are the necessary consequences of corruption and dependency, should ever contribute to make the court become, in any future age, a sanctuary for pickpockets, and an hospital for changelings.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XVII.

SIR,

THE great alteration we have spoken of, in property and power, brought our constitution, by slow degrees, and through many struggles and dangers, so near the most perfect idea of a free system of government, that nothing would be now wanting to complete it, if effectual means were found of securing the independency of parliament against corruption, as well as it is secured against prerogative. Our kings have lost little of the gaudy plumage of the crown. Some of their superfluous power, indeed, hath been bought, and more hath been wrested from them. Notwithstanding which, it is a very demonstrable truth, that the crown must sit lighter and more secure on the head of a wise prince, (and no constitution provides for, though every constitution should provide against, a weak prince) since the great change of property and power in favour of the commons, than ever it did before. Our kings are no longer exposed, as some of the greatest of them have been, to the insults of turbulent, ambitious lords, or haughty prelates. It is no longer in the power of a few factious noblemen to draw armies into the field, and oblige their prince to fight for his crown, to fight to gain it, and to fight to keep it; as Edward the fourth did, I think, in nine pitched battles. To make the prince uneasy, or insecure, as we are now constituted, the whole

body of the people must be uneasy under his government. A popular king of Great Britain will be always not only easy and secure, but in effect absolute. He will be, what the British constitution alone can make any prince, the absolute monarch of a free people; and this popularity is so easily acquired, a king gains the publick confidence and affection at so cheap a rate, that he must be poor indeed in all the kingly virtues, who does not purchase them, and establish true popularity upon them.

If the condition of our kings is mended in many respects, and made worse in none, that of the nation is mended in every respect, by the great improvements of our constitution; which are due principally to the change I have mentioned, as the advances we have made in trade, and in national wealth and power, are due principally to these improvements. It is by these, that the subjects of Great Britain enjoy hitherto such a freedom of their persons, and such a security of their property, as no other people can boast. Hence that great encouragement of industry; hence that broad and solid foundation of credit, which must always continue, unless the weight of taxes, and the oppression of tax-gatherers make it worth no man's while to be industrious any longer; and unless national credit be reduced, by length of time, and private management, to rest no longer on it's natural and original foundation, but on the feeble props of yearly expedients, and daily tricks; by which a system, that ought to be the plainest

and

and fairest imaginable, will become of course a dark intricate, and wicked mystery of stockjobbing.

But the great advantage we are to insist upon here, which hath arisen to the whole nation from the alteration in the state of property and power, is this: that we have been brought by it to the true poise of a mixed government, constituted like ours on the three simple forms. The democratical power is no longer kept under the same dependencies; and if a house of commons should now fail to assert that independent share in supreme legislative power, which the constitution assigns to this assembly, it could not proceed, as it might and sometimes did formerly, from the nature of tenures, and many other unavoidable restraints; it could proceed alone from the corruption of particular men, who threw themselves into a voluntary dependency. The democratical power of our constitution is not sufficient, to overtop the monarchical and aristocratical; but it is sufficient, to counterwork and balance any other power by it's own strength, and without the fatal necessity of favouring the ambition of the crown against the lords, or that of the lords against the crown. Nay more, as our government is now constituted, the three estates have not only one common interest, which they always had; but they have, considered as estates, no separate, contradictory interest. Our constitution gives so much grandeur, so much authority and power to the crown, and our parliaments give so immense a revenue, that no prince hath any real interest to desire more,

mote, who looks on himself as the supreme magistrate of a free people; for if we suppose inordinate ambition, or avarice, to make part of his character, these passions are insatiable: but then for this very reason, because they are so, there ought to be no account held of them; and though a prince may measure his demands, a people, who are in their senses, will never measure their concessions by them.

The property of the commons is not only become far superiour to that of the lords upon the whole, but in the detail there are few, very few, instances to be produced of greater shares of private property among the latter, than among the former; and as the property of the commons is greater, so it is equally free. There are no badges of servitude on one side; no pretence of any superiority, except those of title and rank, on the other. The peers are, in some points, I speak it with all the respect due to them, commoners with coronets on their coats of arms: and affecting to act as such, it is plain they desire very wisely to be taken for such, on many occasions. The interests of these two estates then, with regard to property, are the same; and their particular rights and privileges are now so well ascertained, and so distinguished, that as the proximity of their interests of one sort should always unite them, so the distance of those of another sort cannot easily make them clash. In short, these two orders, according to the present constitution, (and how different it is from that of Rome, or, in the last respect, even from

from that of Spain, not to mention that of France?) have no temptation, and scarce the means, of invading each other: so that they may the better, and the more effectually, employ their vigilance, and unite their efforts, whenever it shall be necessary, against the encroachments of the crown, from whose shackles they have both emancipated themselves, whether the attempts to impose these shackles again are carried on by prerogative, or by the more formidable enemy of liberty, corruption.

It hath been observed already, that although the crown hath the sole power of creating peers, yet the independency of the peerage on the crown is secured by this; that their rights and privileges cannot be taken from them, at the will of the crown. Could the crown unmake, as well as make peers, it would be a jest to talk of three estates, since there would be virtually, and in effect, but two; and therefore our constitution hath provided against it. But the commons of Great Britain can make, and at proper seasons, and in a proper manner, unmake their representatives; by which means, many inconveniencies and mischiefs are avoided, and many wise and just ends obtained. The peers of the realm can, the commons cannot, assemble in their collective body, without exceeding those numbers, among whom the quiet, order, decency, and solemnity of a senate may be preserved. The peers therefore sit in parliament in their collective, the commons in their representative body. The peers have an inherent, the commons a delegated right. The peers are therefore

therefore accountable for their conduct, as all other men are, to God, to their own consciences, to the tribunal of publick fame, and to no other. But the commons are accountable to another tribunal, as well as to these, to that of their constituents; before which they must frequently appear, according to the true intent of our constitution, to have a censure, or approbation, passed on their conduct, by the refusal, or grant of new powers to the particular members. Thus the collective body of the people of Great Britain delegate, but do not give up, trust, but do not alienate their right and their power, and cannot be undone by having beggary or slavery brought upon them, unless they cooperate to their own undoing, and in one word betray themselves.

We cannot therefore subscribe to those two sayings of my lord Bacon, which are quoted to this effect; "That England can never be "undone, unless by parliaments; and that there "is nothing, which a parliament cannot do."— Great Britain, according to our present constitution, cannot be undone by parliaments; for there is something, which a parliament cannot do. A parliament cannot annul the constitution; and while that is preserved, though our condition may be bad, it cannot be irretrievably so. The legislative is a supreme, and may be called, in one sense, an absolute, but in none an arbitrary power. "It is limited to the publick good of "the society. It is a power, that hath no other "end but preservation, and therefore can never "have

" have a right to deſtroy, enslave, or designedly to " impoverish the subjects; for the obligations of the " law of nature cease not in society, &c.*"—If you therefore put so extravagant a case, as to suppose the two houses of parliament concurring to make at once a formal cession of their own rights and privileges, and of thoſe of the whole nation to the crown, and ask who hath the right, and the means, to resist the supreme legislative power? I answer, the whole nation hath the right; and a people who deserve to enjoy liberty, will find the means. An attempt of this kind would break the bargain between the king and the nation, between the representative and collective body of the people, and would dissolve the constitution. From hence it follows, that the nation which hath a right to preserve this constitution, hath a right to resist an attempt, that leaves no other means of preserving it but those of resistance. From hence it follows, that if the constitution was actually dissolved, as it would be by such an attempt of the three estates, the people would return to their original, their natural right, the right of restoring the same constitution, or of making a new one. No power on earth could claim any right of imposing a constitution upon them; and less than any that king, those lords, and those commons, who, having been entrusted to preserve, had destroyed the former.—But to suppose a case more

* Locke's Essay on civil Government, c. 11, of the extent of the legislative power.

within

within the bounds of possibility, though one would be tempted to think it as little within those of probability, let us suppose our parliaments, in some future generation, to grow so corrupt, and the crown so rich, that, a pecuniary influence constantly prevailing over the majority, they should assemble for little else than to establish grievances, instead of redressing them; to approve the measures of the court, without information; to engage their country in alliances, in treaties, in wars, without examination; and to give money without account, and almost without ſtint. The case would be deplorable. Our constitution itself would become our grievance, while this corruption prevailed; and if it prevailed long, our conſtitution could not last long; because this ſlow progress would lead to the deſtruction of it as ſurely as the more concise method of giving it up at once. But, in this case, the conſtitution would help itself, and effectually too, unless the whole maſs of the people was tainted, and the electors were become no honester than the elected. Much time would be required to beggar and enſlave the nation, in this manner. It could ſcarce be the work of one parliament, though parliaments ſhould continue to be septennial. It could not be the work of a triennial parliament moſt certainly: and the people of Great Britain would have none to blame but themſelves; because, as the conſtitution is a ſure rule of action to thoſe, whom they chooſe to act for them, ſo it is likewiſe a ſure rule of judgment to them, in the choice of their truſtees,

and particularly of such as have represented them already. In short, nothing can destroy the constitution of Britain, but the people of Britain: and whenever the people of Britain become so degenerate and base, as to be induced by corruption, for they are no longer in danger of being awed by prerogative, to choose persons to represent them in parliament, whom they have found by experience to be under an influence, arising from private interest, dependents on a court, and the creatures of a minister; or others, who are unknown to the people that elect them, and bring no recommendation but that which they carry in their purses; then may the enemies of our constitution boast, that they have got the better of it, and that it is no longer able to preserve itself, nor to defend liberty. Then will that trite, proverbial speech be verified in our case, "that the corruptions of "the best things are the worst;" for then will that very change in the state of property and power, which improved our constitution so much, contribute to the destruction of it; and we may even wish for those little tyrants, the great lords and the great prelates again, to oppose the encroachments of the crown. How preferable will subjection to those powerful landlords (whom the commonalty were accustomed to serve; and by whom, if they suffered on one hand, they had considerable advantages on the other) how preferable, indeed, will this subjection appear to them, when they shall see the whole nation oppressed by a few upstarts in power; often

by

by the meanest, always by the worst of their fellow-subjects; by men, who owe their elevation and riches neither to merit nor birth, but to the favour of weak princes, and to the spoils of their country, beggared by their rapine! Then will the fate of Rome be renewed, in some sort, in Britain. The grandeur of Rome was the work of many centuries, the effect of much wisdom, and the price of much blood. She maintained her grandeur, while she preserved her virtue; but when luxury grew up to favour corruption, and corruption to nourish luxury, then Rome grew venal; the election of her magistrates, the sentences of her judges, the decrees of her senate, all was sold: for her liberty was sold when these were sold; and her riches, her power, her glory could not long survive her liberty. She, who had been the envy, as well as the mistress of nations, fell to be an object of their scorn, or their pity. They had seen and felt that she governed other people by will, and her own by law. They beheld her governed herself by will; by the arbitrary will of the worst of her own citizens, of the worst of both sexes, of the worst of human kind; by Caligula, by Claudius, by Nero, by Messalina, by Agrippina, by Poppæa, by Narcissus, by Calistus, by Pallas; by princes that were stupid or mad; by women that were abandoned to ambition and to lust; by ministers that were emancipated slaves, parasites and panders, insolent and rapacious. In this miserable state, the few that retained some sparks of the old Roman spirit had double cause to mourn

in private; for it was not safe even to mourn in publick. They mourned the loss of the liberty and grandeur of Rome; and they mourned that both should be sacrificed to wretches, whose crimes would have been punished, and whose talents would scarce have recommended them to the meanest offices, in the virtuous and prosperous ages of the commonwealth. Into such a state, the difference of times and of other circumstances considered, at least, into a state as miserable as this, will the people of Britain both fall, and deserve to fall, if they suffer, under any pretence, or by any hands, that constitution to be destroyed, which cannot be destroyed, unless they suffer it; unless they cooperate with the enemies of it, by renewing an exploded distinction of parties; by electing those to represent them, who are hired to betray them; or by submitting tamely, when the mask is taken off, or falls off, and the attempt to bring beggary and slavery is avowed, or can be no longer concealed. If ever this happens, the friends of liberty, should any such remain, will have one option still left; and they will rather choose, no doubt, to die the last of British freemen, than bear to live the first of British slaves.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

SIR,

IF we had proposed nothing more to ourselves, in writing this Dissertation on Parties, than the entertainment, such as it is, of your readers, and our own amusement, we should not have dwelt, perhaps, so much on the nature of the British constitution, nor have recurred so often to assert the necessary independency of parliaments on the crown. But we had another motive, which we are neither afraid nor ashamed to avow. This necessary independency of parliaments, in which the essence of our constitution, and by consequence of our liberty consists, seems to be in great, not to say, in imminent danger of being lost. They who are alarmed at every thing that is said in favour of our constitution, and of British liberty, and who are prejudiced against every man who writes or speaks in defence of them, may take, or affect to take, and try to give offence at this expression. But we desire to be understood, as we have explained our meaning upon some former occasion. We understand our constitution to be in danger, not only when it is attacked, but as soon as a breach is made, by which it may be attacked; and we understand this danger to be greater, or less, in proportion to the breach that is made, and without any regard to the probability or improbability of an attack. This explanation of our meaning is the better founded, because the

nation hath an undoubted right to preserve the constitution not only inviolate, but secure from violations. Should corruption prevail among the members, which we trust will never happen as notoriously as it does in the elections of parliament, we all know how much the magnanimity of our present king would scorn to take so mean an advantage over the nation; how much, on the contrary, his heroical spirit would prompt him to maintain the liberty even of a degenerate people, who might deserve no longer the enjoyment of so invaluable a blessing, but who could never deserve to have it taken from them by a prince of that family, which was raised by them to the throne, for no other reason but to preserve it. All this we know; and the nation may have, no doubt, the same confidence in every future king of the same illustrious and royal house. But this will not alter the case; nor make that, which I call danger, cease to be such. Should angels and archangels come down from Heaven to govern us, the same danger would exist, until the springs, from whence it arises, were cut off; not because some angels and archangels have fallen, and from being the guardians, have become the tempters and tormentors of mankind, and others therefore may fall; but because, as private liberty cannot be deemed secure under a government, wherein law, the proper and sole security of it, is dependent on will; so publick liberty must be in danger, whenever a free constitution, the proper and sole security of it, is dependent on will; and a free constitution,

constitution, like ours, is dependent on will whenever the will of one estate can direct the conduct of all three.

Having thus explained what I mean by danger, and taken away all colour for cavil, it remains that I prove this danger to be real, and not the phantom of a crazy imagination, or a prejudiced mind. This shall be done therefore as shortly as I am able, and by an undeniable deduction of facts.

He who undertakes to govern a free people by corruption, and to lead them by a false interest, against their true interest, cannot boast the honour of the invention. The expedient is as old as the world, and he can pretend to no other honour than that of being an humble imitator of the devil. To corrupt our parliaments hath been often attempted as well as to divide our people, in favour of prerogative, and in order to let the arbitrary will of our princes loose from the restraints of law. We observed this in speaking of the reign of Charles the second: but the efforts then made were ineffectual. The frugal habits of the former age were not entirely lost in that; which, I presume, may be reckoned as one cause of the noble stands, that were then made by our parliaments in opposition to the court. But not to ascribe more honour than is due, perhaps, to our fathers, the revenue of the crown was, at that time, so small, (I speak comparatively, for, in every other respect it was very ample) and the profusion of that prince on his pleasures was so great, that no minister of king

Charles the second could find sums sufficient to buy a parliament. He stood therefore on his prerogative, strained it as far as he durst, and made all the use of it he could. The revenue of the crown was greatly increased in the reign of king James the second, and was given most unwisely for life. I say, most unwisely; for as a prince, who hath a heart and head to govern well, cannot stand in need of such a grant; so a prince who hath neither, does not deserve it; and therefore, whatever the generosity of our countrymen to their princes may carry them to do at any time, they might leave this undone at all times, without any reflection on their prudence, or even their generosity. The reign of king James was short; and during this short reign he rested on that prerogative, which he knew was a cheaper expedient than corruption, and which he vainly flattered himself was enough confirmed, to support the measures he took, for subverting the religion, the laws, and the liberty of Britain. Thus were men brought, by the conduct of these two princes, to fix their eyes on prerogative, as the sole instrument of tyranny, and to forget that corruption had been employed, though unsuccessfully, by king Charles, and might have been employed with greater force, and perhaps more success, by king James. The cry of the nation was for a free parliament, and no man seemed to doubt, in that ferment, but that a parliament must be free, when the influence, which the crown had usurped in the precedent reigns over the elections, was removed, as it was by the revolution. But this

this general inadvertency, as well as the particular neglect of those who took the lead in national affairs at that time, is the more surprising, because corruption having been so lately employed, among other means, to render parliaments dependent on the crown, the danger of corruption was, by consequence, one of those dangers against which the nation had a right to be secured, as well as a promise of being so, according to the terms of the prince of Orange's declaration. Those persons especially, who had exclaimed so loudly against placemen and pensioners, in the reign of king Charles, and who complained, at this instant, so bitterly of the undue influence that had been employed in small boroughs chiefly, to promote the elections of the parliament which sat in the reign of king James, ought to have been attentive, one would think, to take the glorious opportunity that was furnished them by a new settlement of the crown, and of the constitution, to secure the independency of parliaments effectually for the future. Machiavel observes, and makes it the title of one of his discourses, that "a free government, in order to maintain itself free, hath need, every day, "of some new provisions in favour of liberty." The truth of this observation, and the reasons that support it are obvious. But as every day may not furnish opportunities of making some of those new and neceſſary provisions, no day that does furnish the opportunity ought to be neglected. The Romans had been so liberal in bestowing the right of citizens on strangers, that the

power

power of their elections began to fall into such hands as the constitution had not intended to trust with them. Quintus Fabius saw the growing evil; and being censor, he took the opportunity; confined all these new electors into four tribes; put it out of their power to turn the elections, as they had done, while their numbers were divided among all the tribes; freed his country from this danger; restored the constitution, according to the true intent and meaning of it; and obtained by universal suffrage the title of Maximus. If a spirit like this had prevailed among us, at the time we speak of, something like this would have been done: and surely something like it ought to have been done; for the revolution was, in many instances, and it ought to have been so in all, one of those renewals of our constitution that we have often mentioned. If it had been such, with respect to the elections of members to serve in parliament, these elections might have been drawn back to the ancient principle on which they had been established; and the rule of property, which was followed anciently, and was perverted by innumerable changes that length of time produced, might have been restored; by which the communities to whom the right of electing was trusted, as well as the qualifications of the electors and the elected, might have been settled in proportion to the present state of things. Such a remedy might have wrought a radical cure of the evil that threatens our constitution; whereas it is much to be apprehended, even from experience, that all others

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are merely palliative; and yet the palliative must be employed, no doubt, till the specifick can be procured.

But nothing of this kind was done at the revolution. Pleased that the open attacks on our constitution were defeated and prevented, men entertained no thought of the secret attacks that might be carried on against the independency of parliaments; as if our dangers could be but of one kind, and could arise but from one family. Soon after the revolution, indeed, men of all sides, and of all denominations, (for it was not a party-cause, though it was endeavoured to be made such) began to perceive, not only that nothing effectual had been done to hinder the undue influence of the crown in elections, and an overbalance of the creatures of the court in parliament, but that the means of exercising such an influence, at the will of the crown, were unawares and insensibly increased, and every day increasing. In a word, they began to see that the foundations were laid of giving as great power to the crown indirectly, as the prerogative, which they had formerly dreaded so much, could give directly, and of establishing universal corruption. The firſt hath happened, and we pray that the last never may.

The net revenue of the crown, at the abdication of king James, amounted to somewhat more than two millions, without any tax on land or malt, and without a multitude of grievous impositions and excises, that have been since heaped on the nation. It is plain, and it was so then, that this revenue might

might have been so increased, as to answer annually the great annual expenses, in which we engaged soon afterward. In this case, the people would not have had a greater, nay nor so great a burden to bear, as they had in the course of the two wars that followed; and, at the end of these wars, they would have found themselves with little or no load upon them, instead of crouching under a debt of fifty millions. That this method was not taken, furnishes matter of very melancholy reflection to the present, and will do so to future generations. But these reflections are no part of my subject. How it came to pass that a method so practicable, and so eligible, was not taken, (whether this was owing to private interest, to party-cunning of different and opposite kinds, or to an unhappy refinement in politicks, that contracting national debts, under a new establishment, was an effectual expedient to attach men to this establishment) I shall not presume to say. All three might have their share, perhaps, in determining for another measure. At least it is a point, on which the men of that time have spoken with much prejudice, and little candour. But however that might be, certain it is that we began to borrow at high interest, to anticipate and mortgage, immediately after the revolution: and having once begun, there was no remedy; we were forced to proceed in the same manner, through the course of two mighty wars. Formerly, the whole expense of the state was borne by the crown; and when this expense grew, upon extraordinary occasions,

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too great for the revenue of the crown to bear, the people aided the crown, if they approved the occasions of the expense. These grants were properly aids, no more: for the revenue of the crown was engaged in the first place, and therefore it might seem reasonable, that the crown should have the levying and management of the whole; of these aids, as well as of the standing revenue. But it happened in this case, as it does in many; the reason of the thing ceased, and the thing continued. A separate private revenue, or a civil-list, as we commonly call it, was assigned to the crown. From that time, the former order hath been reversed. Our kings, instead of contributing most, have contributed nothing to the publick charge; and the people of Britain, instead of giving occasionally aids to the crown, have taken upon themselves the whole load of ordinary and extraordinary expenses, for which they annually provide. Notwithstanding this vast alteration in the state of the revenue, and the interest of the king and the people in the management of it, the same forms of granting aids to the crown, and of levying taxes, and of managing the publick treasure, have been continued: so that the people stand obliged (for the crown, that is trusted with the whole, is bound for nothing) to make good all deficiencies, though they have no share in the management of the revenue. Our kings, since the establishment of the civil-list, have not only a private and separate estate, but receive a kind of rent-charge out of the publick estate, to maintain

maintain their honour and dignity, nothing else: and whether the publick estate thrive, or not, this rent-charge must be made good to them; at least, as it hath been settled on our present most gracious monarch, if the funds appropriated produce the double of that immense revenue of eight hundred thousand pounds a year, which hath been so liberally given him for life, the whole is his, without account; but if they fail in any degree to produce it, the intire national fund is engaged to make up the difference. But although our kings have thus no longer any immediate interest in the publick estate, they are trusted with the intire management of it. They are not only stewards for the publick, but they condescend to be such for all those private persons, who are the creditors of the publick, and have the additional trouble of managing about three millions a year, on this head.

Now this new settlement, which appears absurd in speculation, how wise soever it may have been thought contrived for practice, hath had this evident and inevitable consequence. As we have annually increased our funds, and our taxes, we have annually increased the power of the crown; and these funds and taxes being established and laid for perpetuity, or for terms equivalent to perpetuity, in the sense here intended, this increase of power must not only continue, but still increase, as long as the system of œconomy subsists. How this increase of power arises from the increase of funds and taxes, and the influence of the crown grows,

grows, in proportion to the burden on the people, heavier, hath been explained so much in the debates on a late detestable occasion, that much less needs to be said on the subject here. If we consider, in the increase of taxes, nothing more than the increase of officers first, by which a vast number of new dependents on the crown are created on every part of the kingdom; (dependents as numerous, and certainly more prevalent than all the tenants and wards of the crown were anciently;) and secondly, the powers given to the treasury, and other inferiour officers, on account of these taxes, which are at least as great and as grievous, in this free government of ours, as any that are exercised in the most arbitrary government, on the same occasions; if we consider this alone, we shall find reason sufficient to conclude, that although the power of prerogative was more open, and more noisy in it's operations, yet the power thus acquired is more real, and may prove more dangerous for this very reason, because it is more covered and more silent. That men began to see, very soon after the revolution, the danger arising from hence to our constitution, as I said above, is most certain. No less than seven acts were made, in king William's reign, to prevent undue influences on elections; and one of the acts, as I remember, for I have it not before me, is grounded on this fact, "that the officers of the "excise had frequently, by threats and promises, "prevailed on electors, and absolutely debarred "them of the freedom of voting*." What hath

* Tertio Gul. & Mar.

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been done, or attempted to be done, since that time, in the same view, and what hath been done, or attempted to be done, both in the reign of king William and since, to prevent an undue influence on the elected, as well as on the electors, I need not recapitulate. They are matters of fresh date, and enough known. Upon the whole, this change in the state and property of the publick revenue hath made a change in our constitution, not yet perhaps attended to sufficiently, but such a one however as deserves our utmost attention, since it gives a power, unknown in former times, to one of the three estates; and since publick liberty is not guarded against the dangers that may arise from this power, as it was, and as it is now more than ever, against the dangers that used to arise from the powers formerly possessed or claimed by the crown. Formerly, prerogative was kept in sight, and provisions were made against the effects and encroachments of it, as often as occasion required, and opportunity offered. They who called themselves friends to the government, in those days, opposed these provisions. They who were friends to the constitution promoted them. That the same thing should happen again, in a similar case, we must expect. But as the friends of the constitution, in times past, were not deterred, tempted, nor wearied, while they defended it against dangers of one kind, and by their honest perseverance delivered it down, not only safe, but more improved, to posterity; let

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us flatter ourselves with this agreeable hope, that the friends of the constitution, at this time, and in all times to come, will be neither deterred, tempted, nor wearied in the same generous cause, in watching and guarding it against dangers of another kind; and that they will deliver it down, in like manner, to future generations. Sure I am there are reasons, and those of no small moment, why they should be more watchful, more upon their guard, more bold, and more incessant in their endeavours, if possible, even than the assertors of British liberty were formerly; and the enumeration of some of these reasons is an article not to be omitted on this occasion.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTER XIX.

SIR,

As the means then of influencing by prerogative, and of governing by force, were considered to be increased formerly, upon every increase of power to the crown, so are the means of influencing by money, and of governing by corruption, to be considered as increased now, upon that increase of power, which hath accrued to the crown by the new constitution of the revenue since the revolution. Nay farther. Not only the means of corrupting are increased, on the part of the crown, but the facility of employing these means with success is increased, on the part of the people, on the part of the electors, and of the elected. Nay, farther still. These means and this facility are not only increased, but the power of the crown to corrupt, as I have hinted already, and the proneness of the people to be corrupted, must continue to increase on the same principles, unless a stop be put to the growing wealth and power of one, and the growing depravity of the other. We are, to be sure, in no danger from any advantages his majesty will take of this situation; but if advantage be not taken, in favour of our constitution, of the present most happy reign, of the mild and beneficent temper of our heroical monarch, of the generous principle, instilled by nature, and improved by philosophy, of his royal consort, it may be supposed, for we speak hypothetically

thetically all along, as the reader will please to remember, even where the precaution is not used; it may be supposed, I say, that pretended friends to the government, and real enemies to this constitution, no matter whether they are such by principle, or become such by their crimes, will get into superiour power, in some future time, and under some weak or wicked prince: and whenever this happens, the subversion of our constitution, and of our liberty by consequence, will be the most easy enterprise imaginable; because nothing can be more easy, than the creation of an anticonstitutional dependency of the two houses of parliament on the crown will be in that case; and because such a dependency of the two houses is as real a subversion of our constitution as an absolute abolishment of paliaments would be.

The first of those means of corruption, that have grown up, or been increased, since the revolution, which I shall mention, is the establishment of the civil list; not so much on account of the manner in which it was originally given, as on account of that in which it hath been since given, and of the vast augmentations that have been made to it; augmentations, that may be doubled, or trebled, in times to come, upon the same motives, under the same and other pretences; in short, just as speciously as they have been made. The revenue of king James the second, as it stood at his abdication, hath been mentioned; and it would not be hard to show, by indisputable computations, that they who apprehended he might

be able to govern without parliaments, or to buy parliaments if he wanted their assistance, had good reason for such apprehensions, notwithstanding the expense he was at, over and above all the ordinary charges of the government in maintaining against law a great standing army of sixteen or eighteen thousand men.———But to go back to the reign of king Charles the second, whose revenue was much less. The patriots of that age, even when this revenue was computed at no more than one million two hundred thousand pounds a year, took great alarm at the pecuniary influence it might create, and looked upon it, and spoke of it, as a fund for corruption. Now if this revenue could afford a fund for corruption, when, besides maintaining the honour and dignity of the crown, it was to defray all the other expenses of the state, and among the rest, those of a small army, and a great fleet; what would the same patriots think of a revenue of eight hundred thousand pounds, or a million a year, applicable to the particular expenses of the crown alone, and not one farthing of which sacred treasure was ever diverted to any national use? They would have the same just confidence, no doubt, as we have in his present majesty; but they would say as we do, that so immense a private, or separate revenue, may become hereafter an inexhaustible fund of corruption, and therefore that the independency of parliaments is and must be in real danger, till some remedies, as effectual against the pecuniary influence, as have been found against the prerogative

of the crown, are provided. They would show that a small sum, in aid of places and pensions, of fears and expectations, might serve for the ordinary charge of annual corruption; and that a small saving reserved every year might produce, at the end of seven, a fund sufficient for the extraordinary charge of septennial and national corruption.

But again. If we suppose the civil list to become an insufficient fund for these purposes, by the profusion of some future king, (and nothing less than the most extravagant profusion can make it so; or if we suppose that some future king may join to so many ill qualities, as leave him no means of governing but by corruption, a sordid avarice, that renders him unable to open his coffers, even for this use; yet will a very little iniquitous cunning suffice to create funds for corruption, that may come in aid of the civil list. It is natural for men to be less frugal, when others are to pay for their want of frugality. Our kings therefore may become more apt to take, and our ministers to advise such engagements, as plunge the nation, at every turn, into vast expense; since the load, which fell, in part at least, on the crown formerly, falls intire on the people now. But beside this general reason to promote a want of frugality, there may arise particular reasons, of more positive and more pernicious effect. A weak administration, for instance, may pretend publick necessity, when private inability alone hath formed the conjuncture; and frequent and extravagant supplies

may be asked and obtained, to do, or to undo, by the weight of money, what might have been attained, or prevented, by a little foresight, and by a prudent conduct. A wicked administration may propose to impoverish the people; to render them as submissive and as abject as the subjects, the boors, or the slaves, in some foreign countries, and to beggar them out of their sturdiness. But there is another view, that may be common to a weak and a wicked administration both. In such an age as we suppose, publick money will be easily granted, and publick accounts rarely, or incuriously inspected. The ministers therefore, though never so weak, may be impudent enough to ask, and able enough to get frequent supplies, on national pretences, for private purposes. The consequences of this are manifold; for, in general, the more money passes through their hands, the more opportunities they have of gain; and, in particular, they may share, if they please, in every bad bargain they make for the publick; and the worse their bargain, the better their share will be. Thus an immense subsidy given to some little prince, who deals in soldiers, or an immense arrear stated in favour of these little merchants of human flesh, may be so ordered as to steal enough from the publick to replenish the royal coffers, to glut the ministers, to feed some of their hungry creatures, and to bribe a parliament besides. Several of these occasional jobs may be, and, no doubt, will be contrived, in such an age, and by such means as we here suppose, and may be justly reckoned as so many auxiliary

funds, belonging to the great aggregate fund of corruption. Let us, however, break off from discoursing of these, which may be more easily and more frequently contrived under the present, but might have been contrived under the former constitution of the revenue; and let us turn our discourse, to speak of that great source of corruption, which was opened soon after the revolution; which was unknown before it, and which hath spread, since it was opened, like the box of Pandora, innumerable evils over this unhappy country.

The increase and continuance of taxes acquire to the crown, by multiplying officers of the revenue, and by arming them with formidable powers against the rest of their fellow-subjects, a degree of power, the weight of which the inferiour ranks of our people have long felt, and they most, who are most useful to the commonwealth, and which even the superiour ranks may feel one time or other; for I presume it would not be difficult to ſhow how a full exercise of the powers that are in being, with, or even without some little additions to them, for the improvement of the revenue, that stale pretence for oppression, might oblige the greatest lord in the land to bow as low to a commissioner of the customs, or excise, or to some subaltern harpy, as any nobleman or gentleman in France can be obliged to bow to the intendant of his province. But the establishment of publick funds, on the credit of these taxes, hath been productive of more and greater mischiefs than the

taxes themselves, not only by increasing the means of corruption, and the power of the crown, but by the effect it hath had on the spirit of the nation, on our manners, and our morals.

It is impossible to look back, without grief, on the necessary and unavoidable consequences of this establishment; or without indignation on that mystery of iniquity, to which this establishment gave occasion, which hath been raised upon it, and carried on, for almost half a century, by means of it. It is impossible to look forward, without horrour, on the consequences that may still follow. The ordinary expenses of our government are defrayed, in great measure, by anticipations and mortgages. In times of peace, in days of prosperity, as we boast them to be, we contract new debts, and we create new funds. What must we do in war, and in national distress? What will happen, when we have mortgaged and funded all we have to mortgage and to fund; when we have mortgaged to new creditors that sinking fund, which was mortgaged to other creditors not yet paid off; when we have mortgaged all the product of our land, and even our land itself? Who can answer, that when we come to such extremities, or have them more nearly in prospect, ten millions of people will bear any longer to be hewers of wood, and drawers of water, to maintain the two hundredth part of that number at ease, and in plenty? Who can answer, that the whole body of the people will suffer themselves to be treated, in favour of a handful of

men, (for they who monopolize the whole power, and may in time monopolize the whole property of the funds, are indeed but a handful) who can answer, that the whole body of the people will suffer themselves to be treated, in favour of such a handful, as the poor Indians are, in favour of the Spaniards; to be parcelled out in lots, as it were; and to be assigned, like these Indians to the Spanish planters, to toil and starve for the proprietors of the several funds? Who can answer, that a scheme, which oppresses the farmer, ruins the manufacturer, breaks the merchant, discourages industry, and reduces fraud into system; which beggars so often the fair adventurer and innocent proprietor; which drains continually a portion of our national wealth away to foreigners, and draws most perniciously the rest of that immense property, that was diffused among thousands, into the pockets of a few; who can answer, that such a scheme will be always endured?—But I have run, before I was aware, from my subject, which requires no more, than that I should take notice of the establishment of the publick funds, as it furnishes new means of corruption on the part of the crown, and new facilities to these means, on the part of the people.

Now this, I suppose, hath need of no proof, and of little explanation; for, first, the whole art of stockjobbing, the whole mystery of iniquity mentioned above, arises from this establishment, and is employed about the funds; and, secondly, the main springs that turn, or may turn, the artificial

wheel

wheel of credit, and make the paper estates that are fastened to it rise or fall, lurk behind the veil of the treasury. From hence it follows, that if this office should be ever unrighteously administered; if there should ever be at the head of it, one of those veteran sharpers, who hath learned by experience how to improve the folly, and aggravate the misfortunes of his fellow-subjects, of the innocent, of the poor, of the widow, and of the orphan, to his own, or any other private advantage; it follows I say, that he must have it in his power, and there can be no doubt of his will, to employ two methods of corruption, without any incumbrance to the civil list. Such a ministerial jobber may employ the opportunities of gaining on the funds, that he can frequently create, by a thousand various artifices, (notwithstanding the excellent provisions that have been lately made against the infamous practice of stockjobbing, by the wisdom of the legislature, and which we promise ourselves will be still improved) and he may apply the gains, that are thus made, to corruption, in aid of the civil-list. He may corrupt men with their own spoils, and bribe even those whom he reduced by his clandestine practices to that penury which could alone make them capable of being bribed; or, when he hath to do with men of another character, (for no rank alone will be sufficient to raise them, in such an age, above the most direct and prostitute corruption;) he may bribe them by a whisper, initiate them into his mystery to gain them, and then secure them by a participation

participation of the same fraud and the same profit.

Though this reasoning be hypothetical, yet the suppositions are not strained, nor unnatural; for as the meanest grubs on earth have raised themselves by stockjobbing to the rank and port of noblemen and gentlemen; so many noblemen and gentlemen debase themselves to their meanness, and acquire the same spirit, by following the same trade. That luxury, which began to spread after the restoration of king Charles the second, hath increased ever since; hath descended from the highest to the lowest ranks of our people, and is become national. Now nothing can be more certain than this, that national luxury and national poverty may, in time, establish national prostitution. Beside this, it is to be considered, that the immense wealth of particular men is a circumstance which always attends national poverty, and is in a great measure the cause of it. We may apply already to our country thus much at least of that which Sallust makes Cato say of the state of Rome; and I wish we could apply no more, —"Habemus luxuriam, atque avaritiam; publicè "egestatem, privatim opulentiam; luxury and "avarice, publick want and private wealth "abound." Now, as publick want, or general poverty, for in that sense I take it here, will lay numbers of men open to the attacks of corruption; so private wealth will have the same effect, especially where luxury prevails, on some of those who do not feel the publick want; for there is imaginary as well as real poverty. He who thought himself rich before, may

may begin to think himself poor, when he compares his wealth, and the expense he is able to make, with those men whom he hath been used to esteem, and perhaps justly, far inferiour to himself in all respects. He who would have been ashamed to participate in fraud, or to yield to corruption, may begin to think the fault venial, when he sees men, who were far below him, rise above him by fraud and by corruption; when he sees them maintain themselves by these means in an elevation, which they could not have acquired by the contrary virtues, if they had had them. Thus may contraries unite in their effect, and poverty and wealth combine to facilitate the means and the progress of corruption. Thus may the great thieves of the nation do more, and less reparable mischief, by the practices they introduce and the examples they set, than by the actual robberies they commit. "Plusque exemplo quàm peccato "nocent," to use an expression of Tully, in one of his books of laws.

Much more might be said, concerning the increase of power which the crown hath acquired, and must continue to acquire, according to the present constitution and management of the revenue. Much more might be said to show, that the power of money, as the world is now constituted, is real power, and that all power without this, is imaginary; that the prince who gets prerogative alone, gets a phantom; but that he who gets money, even without prerogative, gets something real, and will be as much stronger than his neighbours,

neighbours, and his people too, as he hath a greater command of money. In fine, a great deal more might be said to show how much corruption is a more deadly weapon than the highest prerogative, in the hands of men who are enemies to such a constitution of government as ours is.—But I hasten to a conclusion.

If then a spirit of rapine and venality, of fraud and corruption, continue to diffuse themselves, not only luxury and avarice, but every kind of immorality will follow; and the whole may be improved by such ways as have been ſketched out, and by others, whenever the nation falls under a bad government, till the prince on the throne shall not be able to say, speaking of his whole people, even that which Philip the second said, speaking of the corruption of his own court; "They all take money, except myself and Sapena." Britain will then be in that very condition, in which, and in which alone, her constitution, and her liberty by consequence, may be destroyed; because the people may, in a state of universal corruption, and will in no other, either suffer others to betray them, or betray themselves. How near a progress we have made towards this state, I determine not. This I say; it is time for every man, who is desirous to preserve the British constitution, and to preserve it secure, to contribute all he can to prevent the ill effects of that new influence and power, which have gained strength in every reign since the revolution; of those means of corruption that may be employed, one time or other, on the part of the crown, and

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of that proneness to corruption on the part of the people, that hath been long growing, and still grows. It may otherwise happen, that, these causes remaining in force, their effects will become too strong to be checked, and will ensure the ruin of the best constitution upon earth, whenever the men in power shall think their grandeur or their safety concerned in the ruin of it. We are not exposed at present, most certainly, to any such contingency; but the bare possibility of being so is a reason sufficient to awaken and alarm every honest man. Hath not every such man, indeed, reason to be alarmed, when he hears the cause of corruption publickly pleaded, and when men are suffered, nay paid by somebody or other, to plead this unrighteous cause, as if it was that of our most righteous government. Had we lived when the star chamber tyrannized, and many other extravagant powers were exercised, under the authority of the crown, we should have found fault as much as we dared, no doubt, and yet have waited patiently, perhaps, for some favourable opportunity of redressing the grievances. But when we heard these acts of power justified as legal and constitutional, and the prerogative, by virtue of which they were done, claimed as a right in the crown, we should have taken the alarm, I presume, as hot as our predecessors did. Thus, in the case now before us, corruption may have been practised in some degree, perhaps at all times. But then it hath been always kept under by the shame and danger, that attended both the corrupter and the corrupted

ed. It hath been always complained of, never defended, and endeavours have been used, from time to time, with general applause, to prevent it. But according to the principles now avowed, these endeavours were unjust; they ought to be repented of; and the acts made in consequence of them ought to be repealed: for the constitutional independency of the crown cannot be supported, unless the crown have the right and the means of taking their independency from the other parts of the legislature, by keeping the members of those assemblies under a pecuniary influence. Let no man think that the absurdity and profligacy of these doctrines secure us against the effect of them. They may soon grow into vogue, and be reputed as sacred truths as any of those falshoods, that are established by the systems of policy and religion, in many other countries. What can be too absurd, or too profligate, for an absurd and profligate, or for a superstitious people?

But it we should apprehend the effects of these doctrines as little as we esteem the doctors who preach them, yet still the alarm is given by them, and it would be stupidity, or somewhat much worse than stupidity, not to take it. We despise the drummers and trumpeters of an enemy's army; (for I resume the allusion that I applied in the first of these discourses;) but when we hear the noise of their drums and trumpets, we take the alarm, and conclude the enemy is near. The friends of our constitution therefore are in the right

right to join issue upon this point with the enemies of it, and to fix upon this principal and real distinction and difference, the present division of parties; since parties we must have; and since those which subsisted formerly are quite extinguished, notwithstanding all the wicked endeavours of some men, who can have no merit but party-merit, nor safety but in faction, to revive them. If there was merit, and surely there was great merit, in opposing the assertors of prerogative formerly, when it rose so high as to endanger our liberty; there is great merit in opposing the assertors of corruption now, and in exposing the means by which this expedient may be improved to the ruin of our constitution, and therefore of our liberty. Nay, the merit is greater in some respects, if corruption be in itself, in it's own nature, and in the present circumstances of the nation, and dispositions of the people, more dangerous than prerogative ever was; and if the means of establishing a government of arbitrary will, by corruption, be more likely to prove effectual than those of doing it by prerogative ever were. That it should ever become harder to save our country from the effects of corruption, than it was to defeat the efforts of prerogative, God forbid.—On the whole matter, a Dissertation upon Parties could not wind itself up more properly, we think, than by showing that the British constitution of government deserves, above all others, the constant attention, and care to maintain it, of the people who are so happy as to live under it; that it may

may be weakened for want of attention, which is a degree of danger; but that it cannot be destroyed, unless the peers and the commons, that is, the whole body of the people, unite to destroy it, which is a degree of madness, and such a monstrous iniquity, as nothing but confirmed and universal corruption can produce; that since the time, when all our dangers from prerogative ceased, new dangers to this constitution, more silent and less observed, are arisen; and finally, that as nothing can be more ridiculous than to preserve the nominal division of whig and tory parties, which subsisted before the revolution, when the difference of principles, that could alone make the distinction real, exists no longer; so nothing can be more reasonable than to admit the nominal division of constitutionists and anticonstitutionists, or of a court and a country-party, at this time, when an avowed difference of principles makes this distinction real. That this distinction is real cannot be denied, as long as there are men among us, who argue for, and who promote even a corrupt dependency of the members of the two houses of parliament on the crown; and others who maintain that such a dependency of the members takes away the constitutional independency of the two houses, and that this independency lost, our constitution is a dead letter, and we shall be only in a worse condition by preserving the forms of it.

To reduce therefore our present parties to this single division, our present disputes to this single contest, and to fix our principal attention on

this object of danger, too long and too much neglected, hath been and is the sole design of these discourses. The design may have been insufficiently executed, but it is honest; but it is of the last importance; and whatever the enemies of our constitution, who call themselves the friends of the government, may say, to amuse and impose on the weak, ignorant, and trifling part of mankind, the importance of it will be felt every day and every hour, more and more, till it be felt by every man in Britain. Let us hope, and endeavour by all possible means, that it may not be felt too late; and to encourage the constitutionists, or country-party, in this attempt, let us consider from whom an opposition to it is to be expected. ——Shall it be expected then from those, who have passed under the denomination of tories? Certainly not. They feel as much as any men in Britain the preference, that ought to be given to that system of government, which was established by the revolution, and in which they took so great a share, and show themselves as ready to render that great work, which was left and still continues imperfect, complete.—— Shall this opposition be expected from the dissenters? It cannot be. Shall they, who pretend to greater purity than others, become the advocates of corruption? Shall they contribute their endeavours to undermine the best constitution of government they can hope to enjoy, unless they hope to rise on the ruins of it, and to form another on their own model! As religious sects, they deserve

serve indulgence, and they have it; but they are too wise not to see that, as a faction in the state they would deserve none.——In fine, shall this opposition be expected from those who have been called whigs? That too is impossible. Their predecessors asserted the independency of parliaments, and struggled hard against corruption, in former reigns. When the rest of mankind embrace the same principles, and pursue the same ends, shall they renounce one, and run counter to the other? Shall they own themselves against one method of destroying our constitution but for another? Against making kings independent on parliaments by prerogative, but for making parliaments dependent on kings by corruption? Shall they give the enemies of the revolution a plausible pretence to say, that nothing more was meant, by them at least, than a change of government, in which they hoped to find their particular and party account? This would be to cast black and odious colours on the revolution, indeed; more black, and more odious than any that it was in the power of a vain, forward, turbulent preacher * to cast, by his frothy declamations. But the whigs are so far from opposing the endeavours to preserve our constitution, that they cooperate to promote the success of them; and that, however personal prejudices, personal partialities, and old habits, that are daily wearing off, may be still entertained by some among them, all the independent men, who pass under that name, unite in the

* Doctor Sacheverel.

common cause of liberty and their country.——It remains therefore that no national party can be formed in opposition to those, who endeavour to secure the independency of parliaments against the new influence of the crown, and against corruption; nor any strength be exerted, except that of a faction, composed of the refuse of all parties, gleaned up by one who hath none for him.——I would willingly carry this farther; and, in doing so, I shall not advance a paradox, unless it be supposed, which I think would be a greater paradox, that a man may have abilities to destroy the constitution, and yet not sense enough to see his remote, as well as immediate, his family, as well as personal interest. I say then, that if a design of raising the power of the crown above any pitch of prerogative, and of reducing parliaments to an absolute dependency, as well as a faction to support this design, be formed; the very man who forms such a design, and such a faction, must be infatuated, if he can wish very sincerely his own success. His first design, we are sure, will be that of raising a great family, and heaping upon it riches and honours. Shall his second design be that of rendering these riches and honours precarious and insecure, and of entailing servitude on his own race; for it will be impossible to exempt them from the common calamity? Nothing but despair, that is fear void of hope, arising from a consciousness of guilt, can drive any man into such a design. But, in this case, there will be fear opposed to fear, and one of these fears may

be allayed by hope. The fear of being called to a severe account may be mitigated by the hope of escaping. Where is the insolent, rapacious, odious minister, that may not entertain some hope as well as fear, when he sets before his eyes the examples of those who have gone before him? Pallas was the favourite of Agrippina. He governed like the master of the empire, and supported her pride and ambition by his counsels and services, as he had been raised to power and was maintained in it by her credit, while her credit lasted. Nero dismissed him; and seeing him go from court with a crowd at his heels, said pleasantly enough, as if it had been spoken of a dictator, that he went to abdicate. But Pallas carried off the spoils of the empire with him; all scores were quitted between him and the publick; and, according to the bargain he had made, he was called to no account*. Many such examples might be cited to comfort with hope the most guilty minister, who is wise, if not honest enough, to stop in the career of iniquity, before the measure of it be entirely filled, pressed down, and running over. But if one of those bubbles of fortune, who thinks he always shall escape, because he always hath escaped,

* Nero infensius iis, quibus superbia muliebris innitebatur, demovet Pallantem curâ rerum, quis, à Claudio impositus, velut arbitrum regni agebat; ferebaturque, digrediente eo, magnâ prosequentium multitudine, non absurdè dixisse, ire Pallantem ut ejuraret. Sanè pepigerat Pallas, ne cujus facti in præteritum interrogaretur, paresque rationes cum republicâ haberet. Tacit. An. l. 13.

not content to wound a free constitution of government, should resolve to make it expire under his administration; the condition of such a one, however he may flatter himself, or be flattered by others, must be ten times more wretched and forlorn than the worst of those to which his cruelty hath reduced multitudes —For what?—If he succeeds in his sacrilegious designs, (they are of as deep a dye, at least,) he may hope for impunity, perhaps, to his gray hairs, and be suffered to languish through the infirmities of old age, with an inward remorse more pungent than any of them; but he is sure to entail servitude on his whole race, and indelible infamy on his memory. If he fails, he misses of that impunity, to which he sacrificed his country; he draws triple vengeance on his own head; and exposes his innocent family to a thousand misfortunes, of which it will not be the least, whether he succeeds or fails, that they descended from him.——But whatever ministers may govern, whatever factions may arise, let the friends of liberty lay aside the groundless distinctions, which are employed to amuse and betray them; let them continue to coalite, let them hold fast their integrity, and support with spirit and perseverance the cause of their country, and they will confirm the good, reclaim the bad, vanquish the incorrigible, and make the British constitution triumph, even over corruption.

I have now gone through the task I imposed on myself, and shall only add these few words. There was an engagement taken, in the beginning

of

of these discourses, not to flatter. I have kept this engagement, and have spoken with great freedom; but I hope with the justice, and moderation, and decency, that I intended, of persons and of things. This freedom entitles me to expect, that no parallels, no inuendoes should be supposed to carry my sense farther than I have expressed it. The reasonable part of mankind will not disappoint so reasonable an expectation. But there are a set of creatures, who have no mercy on paper, to use an expression of Juvenal *, and who are ready to answer, even when they are absolute strangers to the subject. Unable to follow a thread of fact and argument, they play with words, and turn and wrest particular passages. They have done mine that honour, as I am told, and have once or twice seen. They may do the same again, whenever they please, secure from any reply, unless they have sense enough, or their patron for them, to take for a reply the story I am going to tell you, and which you may find related a little differently in one of the Spectators. The story is this.

A certain pragmatical fellow, in a certain village, took it into his head to write the names of the 'squire, of all his family, of the principal parish-officers, and of some of the notable members of the vestry, in the margin of the Whole Duty of Man, over-against every sin which he found mentioned in that most excellent treatise. The clamour was

* —— stulta est clementia ——
—— perituræ parcere chartæ.

great, and all the neighbourhood was in an uproar. At last, the minister was called in upon this great emergency; a pious and prudent divine, and the same, for ought I know, who was a member of the Spectator's club. He heard them with patience; with so much, that he brought them to talk one after the other. When he had heard them, he pronounced that they were all in the wrong; that the book was written against sins of all kinds, whoever should be guilty of them; but that the innocent would give occasion to unjust suspicions by all this clamour, and that the guilty would convict themselves. They took his advice. The Whole Duty of Man hath been read ever since, with much edification, by all the parishioners. The innocent hath been most certainly confirmed in virtue, and we hope the guilty have been reformed from vice.

I am, SIR, &c.

LETTERS

ON THE

STUDY AND USE

OF

HISTORY.

First published in the Craftsman. — 1736.

LETTER I. On the Study and Use of History.
------ II. Concerning the true Use and Advantages of it.
------ III. Objection against the Utility of History removed.
------ IV. Sufficient Authenticity of History
------ V. The Great Use of History.
------ VI. Use of Modern History.

(Continued in the Fourth Volume.)

OF THE

STUDY OF HISTORY.

LETTER I.

Chantelou in Touraine, Nov. 6, 1735.

MY LORD,*

I HAVE considered formerly, with a good deal of attention, the subject on which you command me to communicate my thoughts to you: and I practised in those days, as much as business and pleasure allowed me time to do, the rules that seemed to me necessary to be observed in the study of history. They were very different from those which writers on the same subject have recommended, and which are commonly practised. But I confess to your lordship, that this neither gave me then, nor has given me since, any distrust of them. I do not affect singularity. On the contrary, I think that a due deference is to be paid to received opinions, and that a due compliance with received customs is to be held; though both the one and the other should be, what they often are, absurd or ridiculous. But this servitude is outward only, and abridges in no sort the liberty of private judgment. The obligations of submitting to it likewise, even outwardly, extend no further, than to those opinions and

* Lord Cornbury (afterwards Ld. Hyde) after Bolingbroke's death he was extremely anxious that Mallet, his literary executor, should not publish that part of the 3 letters relative to Eccl. History. But Mallet refuse

and customs which cannot be opposed; or from which we cannot deviate without doing hurt, or giving offence to society. In all these cases, our speculations ought to be free: in all other cases, our practice may be so. Without any regard therefore to the opinion and practice even of the learned world, I am very willing to tell you mine. But, as it is hard to recover a thread of thought long ago laid aside, and impossible to prove some things, and explain others, without the assistance of many books which I have not here; your lordship must be content with such an imperfect sketch, as I am able to send you at present in this letter.

The motives that carry men to the study of history are different. Some intend, if such as they may be said to study, nothing more than amusement, and read the life of Aristides or Phocion, of Epaminondas or Scipio, Alexander or Cæsar, just as they play a game at cards, or as they would read the story of the seven champions.

Others there are, whose motive to this study is nothing better, and who have the further disadvantage of becoming a nuisance very often to society, in proportion to the progress they make. The former do not improve their reading to any good purpose: the latter pervert it to a very bad one, and grow in impertinence as they increase in learning. I think I have known most of the first kind in England, and most of the last in France. The persons I mean are those who read to talk, to shine in conversation, and to impose in company;

company; who having few ideas to vend of their own growth, store their minds with crude unruminated facts and sentences; and hope to supply, by bare memory, the want of imagination and judgment.

But these are in the two lowest forms. The next I shall mention are in one a little higher; in the form of those who grow neither wiser nor better by study themselves, but who enable others to study with greater ease, and to purposes more useful; who make fair copies of foul manuscripts, give the signification of hard words, and take a great deal of other grammatical pains. The obligation to these men would be great indeed, if they were in general able to do any thing better, and submitted to this drudgery for the sake of the publick: as some of them, it must be owned with gratitude, have done, but not later, I think, than about the time of the resurrection of letters. When works of importance are pressing, generals themselves may take up the pick-axe and the spade; but in the ordinary course of things, when that pressing necessity is over, such tools are left in the hands destined to use them, the hands of common soldiers and peasants. I approve therefore very much the devotion of a studious man at Christ-Church, who was overheard in his oratory entering into a detail with God, as devout persons are apt to do, and, among other particular thanksgivings, acknowledging the divine goodness in furnishing the world with makers of dictionaries! These men court fame, as well as their betters, by such means as God has given them

them to acquire it: and Littleton exerted all the genius he had, when he made a dictionary, though Stephens did not. They deserve encouragement, however, while they continue to compile, and neither affect wit, nor presume to reason.

There is a fourth class, of much less use than these, but of much greater name. Men of the first rank in learning, and to whom the whole tribe of scholars bow with reverence. A man must be as indifferent as I am to common censure or approbation, to avow a thorough contempt for the whole business of these learned lives; for all the researches into antiquity, for all the systems of chronology and history, that we owe to the immense labours of a Scaliger, a Bochart, a Petavius, an Usher, and even a Marsham. The same materials are common to them all; but these materials are few, and there is a moral impossibility that they should ever have more. They have combined these into every form that can be given to them: they have supposed, they have guessed, they have joined disjointed passages of different authors, and broken traditions of uncertain originals, of various people, and of centuries remote from one another as well as from ours. In short, that they might leave no liberty untaken, even a wild fantastical similitude of sounds has served to prop up a system. As the materials they have are few, so are the very best, and such as pass for authentick, extremely precarious; as some of these learned persons themselves confess.

Julius Africanus, Eusebius, and George the monk, opened the principal sources of all this

science

science; but they corrupted the waters. Their point of view was to make profane history and chronology agree with sacred; though the latter chronology is very far from being established with the clearness and certainty necessary to make it a rule. For this purpose, the ancient monuments, that these writers conveyed to posterity, were digested by them according to the system they were to maintain: and none of these monuments were delivered down in their original form, and genuine purity. The Dynasties of Manetho, for instance, are broken to pieces by Eusebius, and such fragments of them as suited his design, are stuck into his work. We have, we know, no more of them. The Codex Alexandrinus we owe to George the monk. We have no other authority for it: and one cannot see without amazement such a man as Sir John Marsham undervaluing this authority in one page, and building his system upon it in the next. He seems even by the lightness of his expression, if I remember well, for it is long since I looked into his canon, not to be so much concerned what foundation his system had, so he showed his skill in forming one, and reducing the immense antiquity of the Egyptians within the limits of the Hebraick calculation. In short, my lord, all these systems are so many enchanted castles; they appear to be something, they are nothing but appearances: like them too, dissolve the charm, and they vanish from the sight. To dissolve the charm, we must begin at the beginning of them: the expression may be odd, but it is significant.

significant. We must examine scrupulously and indifferently the foundations on which they lean: and when we find these either faintly probable, or grossly improbable, it would be foolish to expect any thing better in the superstructure. This science is one of those that are "a limine salutandæ." To do thus much may be necessary, that grave authority may not impose on our ignorance: to do more, would be to assist this very authority in imposing false science upon us. I had rather take the Darius whom Alexander conquered, for the son of Hystaspes, and make as many anachronisms as a Jewish chronologer, than sacrifice half my life to collect all the learned lumber that fills the head of an antiquary.

LETTER II.

Concerning the true Use and Advantages of the Study of History.

LET me say something of history in general, before I descend into the consideration of particular parts of it, or of the various methods of study, or of the different views of those that apply themselves to it, as I had begun to do in my former letter.

The love of history seems inseparable from human nature, because it seems inseparable from self love. The same principle in this instance carries us forward and backward, to future and to past ages. We imagine that the things, which affect us, must affect posterity: this sentiment runs through mankind, from Cæsar down to the parish-clerk in Pope's Miscellany. We are fond of preserving, as far as it is in our frail power, the memory of our own adventures, of those of our own time, and of those that preceded it. Rude heaps of stones have been raised, and ruder hymns have been composed, for this purpose, by nations who had not yet the use of arts and letters. To go no farther back, the triumphs of Odin were celebrated in Runic songs, and the feats our British ancestors were recorded in those of their bards. The savages of America have the same custom at this day: and long historical ballads of their huntings and their wars are sung

at all their festivals. There is no need of saying how this passion grows, among civilized nations, in proportion to the means of gratifying it: but let us observe that the same principle of nature directs us as strongly, and more generally as well as more early, to indulge our own curiosity, instead of preparing to gratify that of others. The child hearkens with delight to the tales of his nurse: he learns to read, and he devours with eagerness fabulous legends and novels: in riper years he applies himself to history, or to that which he takes for history, to authorized romance: and, even in age, the desire of knowing what has happened to other men yields to the desire alone of relating what has happened to ourselves. Thus history, true or false, speaks to our passions always. What pity it is, my lord, that even the best should speak to our understandings so seldom? That it does so, we have none to blame but ourselves. Nature has done her part. She has opened this study to every man who can read and think: and what she has made the most agreeable, reason can make the most useful, application of our minds. But if we consult our reason, we shall be far from following the examples of our fellow-creatures, in this as in most other cases, who are so proud of being rational. We shall neither read to soothe our indolence, nor to gratify our vanity: as little shall we content ourselves to drudge like grammarians and criticks, that others may be able to study with greater ease and profit, like philosophers and statesmen; as little shall we affect the slender

merit

merit of becoming great scholars at the expense of groping all our lives in the dark mazes of antiquity. All these mistake the true drift of study and the true use of history. Nature gave us curiosity to excite the industry of our minds; but she never intended it should be made the principal, much less the sole object of their application. The true and proper object of this application is a constant improvement in private and in publick virtue. An application to any study that tends neither directly nor indirectly to make us better men and better citizens, is at best but a specious and ingenious sort of idleness, to use an expression of Tillotson: and the knowledge we acquire by it is a creditable kind of ignorance nothing more. This creditable kind of ignorance, is, in my opinion, the whole benefit which the generality of men, even of the most learned, reap from the study of history: and yet the study of history seems to me, of all other, the most proper to train us up to private and publick virtue.

Your lordship may very well be ready by this time, and after so much bold censure on my part, to ask me, what then is the true use of history? in what respect it may serve to make us better and wiser? and what method is to be pursued in the study of it, for attaining these great ends? I will answer you by quoting what I have read somewhere or other, in Dionysius Halicarnassensis. I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples. We need but to cast our eyes on the world, and we shall see the daily force of example: we need

but to turn them inward, and we shall soon discover why example has this force. "Pauci prudentia," says Tacitus, "honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab "noxiis discernunt: plures aliorum eventis do- "centur." Such is the imperfection of human understanding, such the frail temper of our minds, that abstract or general propositions, though ever so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often, till they are explained by examples; and that the wisest lessons in favour of virtue go but a little way to convince the judgment, and determine the will, unless they are enforced by the same means; and we are obliged to apply to ourselves what we see happen to other men. Instructions by precept have the further disadvantage of coming on the authority of others, and frequently require a long deduction of reasoning. "Homines amplius oculis, quam auribus "credunt: longum iter est per præcepta, breve "et efficax per exempla." The reason of this judgment, which I quote from one of Seneca's epistles in confirmation of my own opinion, rests, I think, on this; that when examples are pointed out to us, there is a kind of appeal, with which we are flattered, made to our senses, as well as our understandings. The instruction comes then upon our own authority: we frame the precept after our own experience, and yield to fact when we resist speculation. But this is not the only advantage of instruction by example; for example appeals not to our understanding alone, but to our passions likewise. Example assuages these

or

or animates them; sets passion on the side of judgment, and makes the whole man of a piece; which is more than the strongest reasoning and the clearest demonstration can do: and thus forming habits by repetition, example secures the observance of those precepts which example insinuated. Is it not Pliny, my lord, who says, that the gentlest, he should have added the most effectual way of commanding, is by example? "Mitius jubetur exemplo." The harshest orders are softened by example, and tyranny itself becomes persuasive. What pity it is, that so few princes have learned this way of commanding? But again: the force of examples is not confined to those alone, that pass immediately under our sight: the examples, that memory suggests, have the same effect in their degree, and a habit of recalling them will soon produce the habit of imitating them. In the same epistle, from whence I cited a passage just now, Seneca says that Cleanthes had never become so perfect a copy of Zeno, if he had not passed his life with him; that Plato, Aristotle, and the other philosophers of that school, profited more by the example, than by the discourse of Socrates. (But here, by the way, Seneca mistook; for Socrates died two years according to some, and four years according to others, before the birth of Aristotle: and his mistake might come from the inaccuracy of those who collected for him, as Erasmus observes, after Quintilian, in his judgment on Seneca.) But be this, which was scarce worth a parenthesis, as it will; he adds that

Metrodorus, Hermachus, and Polyænus, men of great note, were formed by living under the same roof with Epicurus, not by frequenting his school. These are instances of the force of immediate example. But your lordship knows, that the citizens of Rome placed the images of their ancestors in the vestibules of their houses: so that, whenever they went in or out, these venerable bustoes met their eyes, and recalled the glorious actions of the dead to fire the living, to excite them to imitate and even to emulate their great forefathers. The success answered the design. The virtue of one generation was transfused, by the magick of example, into several: and a spirit of heroism was maintained through many ages of that commonwealth. Now these are so many instances of the force of remote example; and from all these instances we may conclude, that examples of both kinds are necessary.

The school of example, my lord, is the world; and the masters of this school are history and experience. I am far from contending, that the former is preferable to the latter. I think upon the whole otherwise: but this I say, that the former is absolutely necessary to prepare us for the latter, and to accompany us while we are under the discipline of the latter, that is through the whole course of our lives. No doubt some few men may be quoted, to whom nature gave what art and industry can give to no man. But such examples will prove nothing against me, because I admit that the study of history, without experience,

rience, is insufficient; but assert, that experience itself is so without genius. Genius is preferable to the other two; but I would wish to find the three together: for how great soever a genius may be, and how much soever he may acquire new light and heat, as he proceeds in his rapid course, certain it is that he will never shine with the full lustre, nor shed the full influence he is capable of, unless to his own experience he adds the experience of other men and other ages. Genius, without the improvement, at least of experience, is what comets once were thought to be, a blazing meteor, irregular in his course, and dangerous in his approach; of no use to any system, and able to destroy any. Mere sons of earth, if they have experience without any knowledge of the history of the world, are but half scholars in the science of mankind. And if they are conversant in history without experience, they are worse than ignorant; they are pedants, always incapable, sometimes meddling and presuming. The man, who has all three, is an honour to his country, and a publick blessing: and such, I trust, your lordship will be in this century, as your great grandfather * was in the last.

I have insisted a little the longer on this head, and have made these distinctions the rather, because though I attribute a great deal more, than many will be ready to allow, to the study of history; yet I would not willingly even seem to fall into the ridicule of ascribing to it such extravagant

* Earl of Clarendon.

effects, as several have done from Tully down to Casaubon, la Mothe le Vayer, and other modern pedants. When Tully informs us, in the second book of his Tusculan disputations, that the first Scipio Africanus had always in his hands the works of Xenophon, he advances nothing but what is probable and reasonable. To say nothing of the retreat of the ten thousand, nor of other parts of Xenophon's writings; the images of virtue, represented in that admirable picture the Cyropædia, were proper to entertain a soul that was fraught with virtue, and Cyrus was worthy to be imitated by Scipio. So Selim emulated Cæsar, whose Commentaries were translated for his use against the customs of the Turks: so Cæsar emulated Alexander; and Alexander, Achilles. There is nothing ridiculous here, except the use that is made of this passage by those who quote it. But what the same Tully says, in the fourth book of his academical disputations, concerning Lucullus, seems to me very extraordinary. "In Asiam factus imperator "venit; cum esset Roma profectus rei militaris "rudis;" (one would be ready to ascribe so sudden a change, and so vast an improvement, to nothing less than knowledge infused by inspiration, if we were not assured in the same place, that they were effected by very natural means, by such as it is in every man's power to employ) "partim percontando a peritis, partim in rebus "gestis legendis." Lucullus, according to this account, verified the reproach on the Roman nobility,

bility, which Sallust puts into the mouth of Marius. But as I discover the passion of Marius, and his prejudices to the patricians, in one case; so I discover, methinks, the cunning of Tully, and his partiality to himself, in the other. Lucullus, after he had been chosen consul, obtained by intrigue the government of Cilicia, and so put himself into a situation of commanding the Roman army against Mithridates: Tully had the same government afterward, and though he had no Mithridates, nor any other enemy of consequence, opposed to him; though all his military feats consisted in surprising and pillaging a parcel of highlanders and wild Cilicians; yet he assumed the airs of a conqueror, and described his actions in so pompous a style, that the account becomes burlesque. He laughs indeed, in one of his letters to Atticus, at his generalship: but if we turn to those he writ to Coelius Rufus, and to Cato, upon this occasion, or to those wherein he expresses to Atticus his resentment against Cato, for not proposing in his favour the honours usually decreed to conquerors, we may see how vanity turned his head, and how impudently he insisted on obtaining a triumph. Is it any strain now to suppose, that he meant to insinuate, in the passage I have quoted about Lucullus, that the difference between him and the former governor of Cilicia, even in military merit, arose from the different conjuncture alone; and that Lucullus could not have done in Cilicia, at that time, more than he himself did? Cicero had

had read and questioned at least as much as Lucullus, and would therefore have appeared as great a captain, if he had had as great a prince as Mithridates to encounter. But the truth is, that Lucullus was made a great captain by theory, or the study of history, alone, no more than Ferdinand of Spain and Alphonsus of Naples were cured of desperate distempers by reading Livy and Quintus Curtius: a silly tale, which Bodin, Amyot, and others have picked up, and propagated. Lucullus had served in his youth against the Marsi, probably in other wars, and Sylla took early notice of him: he went into the east with this general, and had a great share in his confidence. He commanded in several expeditions. It was he who restored the Colophonians to their liberty, and who punished the revolt of the people of Mytelene. Thus we see that Lucullus was formed by experience, as well as study, and by an experience gained in those very countries, where he gathered so many laurels afterward in fighting against the same enemy. The late duke of Marlborough never read Xenophon, most certainly, nor the relation perhaps of any modern wars; but he served in his youth under monsieur de Turenne, and I have heard that he was taken notice of, in those early days, by that great man. He afterward commanded in an expedition to Ireland, served a campaign or two, if I mistake not, under king William in Flanders: and, beside these occasions, had none of gaining experience in war, till he came to the head of our armies

armies in one thousand seven hundred and two, and triumphed not over Asiatick troops, but over the veteran armies of France. The Roman had on his side genius and experience cultivated by study: the Briton had genius improved by experience, and no more. The first therefore is not an example of what study can do alone; but the latter is an example of what genius and experience can do without study. They can do much, to be sure, when the first is given in a superiour degree. But such examples are very rare: and when they happen it will be still true, that they would have had fewer blemishes, and would have come nearer to the perfection of private and publick virtue, in all the arts of peace and achievments of war, if the views of such men had been enlarged, and their sentiments ennobled, by acquiring that cast of thought and that temper of mind, which will grow up and become habitual in every man, who applies himself early to the study of history, as to the study of philosophy, with the intention of being wiser and better, without the affectation of being more learned.

The temper of the mind is formed, and a certain turn given to our ways of thinking; in a word, the seeds of that moral character, which cannot wholly alter the natural character, but may correct the evil and improve the good that is in it, or do the very contrary, are sown betimes, and much sooner than is commonly supposed. It is equally certain, that we shall gather or not gather experience, be the better or the worse for this experience, when we come into

into the world and mingle among mankind, according to the temper of mind, and the turn of thought that we have acquired beforehand, and bring along with us. They will tincture all our future acquisitions; so that the very same experience, which secures the judgment of one man, or excites him to virtue, shall lead another into errour, or plunge him into vice. From hence it follows, that the study of history has in this respect a double advantage. If experience alone can make us perfect in our parts, experience cannot begin to teach them till we are actually on the stage: whereas, by a previous application to this study, we con them over at least before we appear there: we are not quite unprepared, we learn our parts sooner, and we learn them better.

Let me explain what I mean by an example. There is scarce any folly or vice more epidemical among the sons of men, than that ridiculous and hurtful vanity, by which the people of each country are apt to prefer themselves to those of every other; and to make their own customs, and manners, and opinions, the standards of right and wrong, of true and false. The Chinese mandarins were strangely surprised, and almost incredulous, when the Jesuits showed them how small a figure their empire made in the general map of the world. The Samojedes wondered much at the Czar of Muscovy for not living among them: and the Hottentot, who returned from Europe, stripped himself naked as soon as he came home, put on his bracelets of guts and garbage,

bage, and grew stinking and lousy as fast as he could. Now nothing can contribute more to prevent us from being tainted with this vanity, than to accustom ourselves early to contemplate the different nations of the Earth, in that vast map which history spreads before us, in their rise and their fall, in their barbarous and civilised states, in the likeness and unlikeness of them all to one another, and of each to itself. By frequently renewing this prospect to the mind, the Mexican with his cap and coat of feathers, sacrificing a human victim to his god, will not appear more savage to our eyes, than the Spaniard with a hat on his head, and a gonilla round his neck, sacrificing whole nations to his ambition, his avarice, and even the wantonness of his cruelty. I might show, by a multitude of other examples, how history prepares us for experience and guides us in it: and many of these would be both curious and important. I might likewise bring several other instances, wherein history serves to purge the mind of those national partialities and prejudices, that we are apt to contract in our education, and that experience for the most part rather confirms than removes: because it is for the most part confined like our education. But I apprehend growing too prolix, and shall therefore conclude this head by observing, that though an early and proper application to the study of history will contribute extremely to keep our minds free from a ridiculous partiality in favour of our own country, and a vicious prejudice against others; yet the same study will create in us a preference

of

of affection to our own country. There is a story told of Abgarus. He brought several beasts taken in different places to Rome, they say, and let them loose before Augustus: every beast ran immediately to that part of the circus, where a parcel of earth taken from his native soil had been laid. "Cre-" dat Judæus Apella." This tale might pass on Josephus; for in him, I believe, I read it: but surely the love of our country is a lesson of reason, not an institution of nature. Education and habit, obligation and interest, attach us to it, not instinct. It is however so necessary to be cultivated, and the prosperity of all societies, as well as the grandeur of some, depends upon it so much, that orators by their eloquence, and poets by their enthusiasm, have endeavoured to work up this precept of morality into a principle of passion. But the examples which we find in history, improved by the lively descriptions, and the just applauses or censures of historians, will have a much better and more permanent effect, than declamation or song, or the dry ethicks of mere philosophy. In fine, to converse with historians is to keep good company: many of them were excellent men, and those who were not such, have taken care however to appear such in their writings. It must be therefore of great use to prepare ourselves by this conversation for that of the world; and to receive our first impressions, and to acquire our first habits, in a scene where images of virtue and vice are continually represented to us in the colours that belong properly to them, before we enter on another scene, where

virtue

virtue and vice are too often confounded, and what belongs to one is ascribed to the other.

Beside the advantage of beginning our acquaintance with mankind sooner, and of bringing with us into the world, and the business of it, such a cast of thought and such a temper of mind as will enable us to make a better use of our experience; there is this further advantage in the study of history, that the improvement we make by it extends to more objects, and is made at the expense of other men: whereas that improvement, which is the effect of our own experience, is confined to fewer objects, and is made at our own expense. To state the account fairly therefore between these two improvements; though the latter be the more valuable, yet allowance being made on one side for the much greater number of examples that history presents to us, and deduction being made on the other of the price we often pay for our experience, the value of the former will rise in proportion. "I have recorded these things," says Polybius, after giving an account of the defeat of Regulus, "that they who read these commentaries may "be rendered better by them; for all men have "two ways of improvement, one arising from "their own experience, and one from the ex-"perience of others. Evidentior quidem illa "est, quæ per propria ducit infortunia; at tutior "illa, quæ per aliena." I use Casaubon's translation. Polybius goes on, and concludes, that "since the first of these ways exposes us to great "labour and peril, while the second works

"the

" the same good effect, and is attended by no " evil circumstance, every one ought to take " for granted, that the study of history is the best " school where he can learn how to conduct " himself in all the situations of life." Regulus had seen at Rome many examples of magnanimity, of frugality, of the contempt of riches, and of other virtues; and these virtues he practised. But he had not learned, nor had opportunity of learning another lesson, which the examples recorded in history inculcate frequently, the lesson of moderation. An insatiable thirst of military fame, and unconfined ambition of extending their empire, an extravagant confidence in their own courage and force, an insolent contempt of their enemies, and an impetuous overbearing spirit, with which they pursued all their enterprises, composed in his days the distinguishing character of a Roman. Whatever the senate and people resolved, to the members of that commonwealth appeared both practicable and just. Neither difficulties nor dangers could check them; and their sages had not yet discovered, that virtues in excess degenerate into vices. Notwithstanding the beautiful rant which Horace puts into his mouth, I make no doubt that Regulus learned at Carthage those lessons of moderation, which he had not learned at Rome: but he learned them by experience, and the fruits of this experience came too late, and cost too dear; for they cost the total defeat of the Roman army, the prolongation of a calamitous war, which might have been finished

finished by a glorious peace, the loss of liberty to thousands of Roman citizens, and to Regulus himself the loss of life in the midst of torments, if we are entirely to credit what is perhaps exaggeration in the Roman authors.

There is another advantage worthy our observation, that belongs to the study of history; and that I shall mention here, not only because of the importance of it, but because it leads me immediately to speak of the nature of the improvement we ought to have in our view, and of the method in which it seems to me that this improvement ought to be pursued: two particulars from which your lordship may think perhaps that I digress too long. The advantage I mean consists in this, that the examples which history presents to us, both of men and of events, are generally complete: the whole example is before us, and consequently the whole lesson, or sometimes the various lessons which philosophy proposes to teach us by this example. For first, as to men; we see them at their whole length in history, and we see them generally there through a medium less partial at least than that of experience: for I imagine that a whig or a tory, while those parties subsisted, would have condemned in Saturninus the spirit of faction which he applauded in his own tribunes, and would have applauded in Drusus the spirit of moderation which he despised in those of the contrary party, and which he suspected and hated in those of his own party. The villain who has imposed on mankind by his power or cunning,

and whom experience could not unmask for a time, is unmasked at length: and the honest man, who has been misunderstood or defamed, is justified before his story ends. Or if this does not happen, if the villain dies with his mask on, in the midst of applause, and honour, and wealth, and power, and if the honest man dies under the same load of calumny and disgrace under which he lived, driven perhaps into exile, and exposed to want; yet we see historical justice executed, the name of one branded with infamy, and that of the other celebrated with panegyrick to succeeding ages. "Præcipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes "sileantur; utque pravis dictis factisque ex pos-"teritate et infamia metus sit." Thus, according to Tacitus, and according to truth, from which his judgments seldom deviate, the principal duty of history is to erect a tribunal, like that among the Egyptians, mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, where men and princes themselves were tried, and condemned or acquitted, after their deaths; where those who had not been punished for their crimes, and those who had not been honoured for their virtues, received a just retribution. The sentence is pronounced in one case, as it was in the other, too late to correct or recompense; but it is pronounced in time to render these examples of general instruction to mankind. Thus Cicero, that I may quote one instance out of thousands, and that I do justice to the general character of that great man, whose particular failing I have censured so freely; Cicero, I say, was abandoned by Octavius,

vius, and massacred by Antony. But let any man read this fragment of Aurelius Fuscus, and choose which he would wish to have been, the orator, or the trium vir? "Quoad humanum "genus incolume manserit, quamdiu usus literis, "honor summæ eloquentiæ pretium erit, quam- "diu rerum natura aut fortuna steterit, aut me- "moria duraverit, admirabile posteris vigebis in- "genium, te uno proscriptus seculo, proscribes "Antonium omnibus."

Thus again, as to events that stand recorded in history; we see them all, we see them as they followed one another, or as they produced one another, causes or effects, immediate or remote. We are cast back, as it were, into former ages: we live with the men who lived before us, and we inhabit countries that we never saw. Place is enlarged, and time prolonged, in this manner; so that the man who applies himself early to the study of history may acquire in a few years, and before he sets his foot abroad in the world, not only a more extended knowledge of mankind, but the experience of more centuries than any of the patriarchs saw. The events we are witnesses of, in the course of the longest life, appear to us very often original, unprepared, single, and unrelative, if I may use such an expression for want of a better in English; in French I would say isolés: they appear such very often, are called accidents, and looked on as the effects of chance; a word, by the way, which is in constant use, and has frequently, no determinate meaning. We get over the present

difficulty, we improve the momentary advantage as well as we can, and we look no farther. Experience can carry us no farther; for experience can go a very little way back in discovering causes: and effects are not the objects of experience till they happen. From hence many errours in judgment, and by consequence in conduct, necessarily arise. And here too lies the difference we are speaking of between history and experience. The advantage on the side of the former is double. In ancient history, as we have said already, the examples are complete, which are incomplete in the course of experience. The beginning, the progression, and the end appear, not of particular reigns, much less of particular enterprises, or systems of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all the various systems that have succeeded one another in the course of their duration. In modern history, the examples may be, and sometimes are, incomplete; but they have this advantage when they are so, that they serve to render complete the examples of our own time. Experience is doubly defective; we are born too late to see the beginning, and we die too soon to see the end of many things. History supplies both these defects. Modern history shows the causes, when experience presents the effects alone: and ancient history enables us to guess at the effects, when experience presents the causes alone. Let me explain my meaning by two examples of these kinds; one past, the other actually present.

When

When the revolution of one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight happened, few men then alive, I suppose, went farther in their search after the causes of it, than the extravagant attempt of king James against the religion and liberty of his people. His former conduct, and the passages of king Charles the second's reign might rankle still at the hearts of some men, but could not be set to account among the causes of his deposition; since he had succeeded, notwithstanding them, peaceably to the throne: and the nation in general, even many of those who would have excluded him from it, were desirous, or at least willing, that he should continue in it. Now this example, thus stated, affords, no doubt, much good instruction to the kings and people of Britain. But this instruction is not entire, because the example thus stated, and confined to the experience of that age, is imperfect. King James's maleadministration rendered a revolution necessary and practicable; but his maleadministration, as well as all his preceding conduct, was caused by his bigot attachment to popery, and to the principles of arbitrary government, from which no warning could divert him. His bigot attachment to these was caused by the exile of the royal family; this exile was caused by the usurpation of Cromwell: and Cromwell's usurpation was the effect of a former rebellion, begun not without reason on account of liberty, but without any valid pretence on account of religion. During this exile, our princes caught the taint of

popery and foreign politicks. We made them unfit to govern us, and after that were forced to recal them, that they might rescue us out of anarchy. It was necessary therefore, your lordship sees, at the revolution, and it is more so now, to go back in history, at least as far as I have mentioned, and perhaps farther, even to the beginning of king James the first's reign, to render this event a complete example, and to develope all the wise, honest, and salutary precepts, with which it is pregnant, both to king and subject.

The other example shall be taken from what has succeeded the revolution. Few men at that time looked forward enough to foresee the necessary consequences of the new constitution of the revenue, that was soon afterward formed; nor of the method of funding that immediately took place; which, absurd as they are, have continued ever since, till it is become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the creation of funds, aud the multiplication of taxes, would increase yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties, by a natural and necessary progression, into more real, though less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution. The excessive ill husbandry practised from the very beginning of king William's reign, and which laid the foundations of all we feel and of all we fear, was not the effect of ignorance, mistake, or what we call chance, but of design and scheme in those who had the sway at that time. I am not so uncharitable, however, as to believe

believe that they intended to bring upon their country all the mischiefs that we, who came after them, experience and apprehend. No, they saw the measures they took singly, and unrelatively, or relatively alone to some immediate object. The notion of attaching men to the new government, by tempting them to embark their fortunes on the same bottom, was a reason of state to some: the notion of creating a new, that is, a moneyed interest, in opposition to the landed interest, or as a balance to it, and of acquiring a superiour influence in the city of London at least, by the establishment of great corporations, was a reason of party to others: and I make no doubt that the opportunity of amassing immense estates by the management of funds, by trafficking in paper, and by all the arts of jobbing, was a reason of private interest to those who supported and improved this scheme of iniquity, if not to those who devised it. They looked no farther. Nay, we who came after them, and have long tasted the bitter fruits of the corruption they planted, were far from taking such an alarm at our distress and our danger, as they deserved; till the most remote and fatal effects of causes, laid by the last generation, was very near becoming an object of experience in this. Your lordship, I am sure, sees at once how much a due reflection on the passages of former times, as they stand recorded in the history of our own, and of other countries, would have deterred a free people from trusting the sole management of so great

a revenue, and the sole nomination of those legions of officers employed in it, to their chief magistrate. There remained indeed no pretence for doing so, when once a salary was settled on the prince, and the publick revenue was no longer in any sense his revenue, nor the publick expense his expense. Give me leave to add, that it would have been, and would be still, more decent with regard to the prince, and less repugnant if not more conformable to the principles and practice too of our government, to take this power and influence from the prince, or to share it with him; than to exclude men from the privilege of representing their fellow-subjects who would choose them in parliament, purely because they are employed and trusted by the prince.

Your lordship sees, not only how much a due reflection upon the experience of other ages and countries would have pointed out national corruption, as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so great a revenue; but also the loss of liberty, as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption.

These two examples explain sufficiently what they are intended to explain. It only remains therefore upon this head, to observe the difference between the two manners, in which history supplies the defects of our own experience. It shows us causes as in fact they were laid, with their immediate effects: and it enables us to guess

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at future events. It can do no more, in the nature of things. My lord Bacon, in his second book of the Advancement of Learning, having in his mind, I suppose, what Philo and Josephus asserted of Moses, affirms divine history to have this prerogative, that the narration may be before the fact as well as after. But since the ages of prophecy, as well as miracles, are past, we must content ourselves to guess at what will be, by what has been: we have no other means in our power, and history furnishes us with these. How we are to improve, and apply these means, as well as how we are to acquire them, shall be deduced more particularly in another letter.

LETTER III.

1. An Objection against the Utility of History removed. 2. The false and true Aims of those who study it. 3. Of the History of the first Ages, with reflections on the state of Ancient History prophane and sacred.

WERE these letters to fall into the hands of some ingenious persons, who adorn the age we live in, your lordship's correspondent would be joked upon for his project of improving men in virtue and wisdom by the study of history. The general characters of men, it would be said, are determined by their natural constitutions, as their particular actions are by immediate objects. Many very conversant in history would be cited, who have proved ill men, or bad politicians; and a long roll would be produced of others, who have arrived at a great pitch of private, and publick virtue, without any assistance of this kind. Something has been said already to anticipate this objection; but since I have heard several persons affirm such propositions with great confidence, a loud laugh, or a silent sneer at the pedants, who presumed to think otherwise; I will spend a few paragraphs, with your lordship's leave, to show that such affirmations, for to affirm among these fine men is to reason, either prove too much, or prove nothing.

If our general characters were determined absolutely, as they are certainly influenced, by our constitutions, and if our particular actions were

were so by immediate objects; all instruction by precept, as well as example, and all endeavours to form the moral character by education, would be unnecessary. Even the little care that is taken, and surely it is impossible to take less, in the training up our youth, would be too much. But the truth is widely different from this representation of it; for, what is vice, and what is virtue? I speak of them in a large and philosophical sense. The former is, I think, no more than the excess, abuse, and misapplication of appetites, desires, and passions, natural and innocent, nay useful and necessary. The latter consists in the moderation and government, in the use and application of these appetites, desires, and passions, according to the rules of reason, and therefore often in opposition to their own blind impulse.

What now is education? that part, that principal and most neglected part of it, I mean, which tends to form the moral character? It is, I think, an institution designed to lead men from their tender years, by precept and example, by argument and authority, to the practice, and to the habit of practising these rules. The stronger our appetites, desires, and passions are, the harder indeed is the task of education: but when the efforts of education are proportioned to this strength, although our keenest appetites and desires, and our ruling passions cannot be reduced to a quiet and uniform submission, yet are not their excesses assuaged? are not their abuses and misapplications in some degree, diverted or checked?

checked? Though the pilot cannot lay the storm, cannot he carry the ship, by his art, better through it, and often prevent the wreck that would always happen, without him? If Alexander who loved wine, and was naturally cholerick, had been bred under the severity of Roman discipline, it is probable he would neither have made a bonfire of Persepolis for his whore, nor have killed his friend. If Scipio, who was naturally given to women, for which anecdote we have, if I mistake not, the authority of Polybius, as well as some verses of Nævius preserved by A. Gellius, had been educated by Olympias at the court of Philip, it is improbable that he would have restored the beautiful Spaniard. In short, if the renowned Socrates had not corrected nature by art, this first apostle of the gentiles had been a very profligate fellow, by his own confession; for he was inclined to all the vices Zopyrus imputed to him, as they say, on the observation of his physiognomy.

With him therefore, who denies the effects of education, it would be in vain to dispute; and with him who admits them, there can be no dispute, concerning that share which I ascribe to the study of history, in forming our moral characters, and making us better men. The very persons who pretend that inclinations cannot be restrained, nor habits corrected, against our natural bent, would be the first perhaps to prove, in certain cases, the contrary. A fortune at court, or the favours of a lady, have prevailed

prevailed on many to conceal, and they could not conceal without restraining, which is one step towards correcting, the vices they were by nature addicted to the most. Shall we imagine now, that the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice, the charms of a bright and lasting reputation, the terrour of being delivered over as criminals to all posterity, the real benefit arising from a conscientious discharge of the duty we owe to others, which benefit fortune can neither hinder nor take away, and the reasonableness of conforming ourselves to the designs of God manifested in the constitution of the human nature; shall we imagine, I say, that all these are not able to acquire the same power over those who are continually called upon to a contemplation of them, and they who apply themselves to the study of history are so called upon, as other motives, mean and sordid in comparison of these, can usurp on other men?

2. That the study of history, far from making us wiser and more useful citizens, as well as better men, may be of no advantage whatsoever; that it may serve to render us mere antiquaries and scholars; or that it may help to make us forward coxcombs, and prating pedants, I have already allowed. But this is not the fault of history: and to convince us that it is not, we need only contrast the true use of history with the use that is made of it by such men as these. We ought always to keep in mind, that history is philosophy teaching by examples how to conduct ourselves

ourselves in all the situations of private and publick life; that therefore we must apply ourselves to it in a philosophical spirit and manner; that we must rise from particular to general knowledge, and that we must fit ourselves for the society and business of mankind by accustoming our minds to reflect and meditate on the characters we find described, and the course of events we find related there. Particular examples may be of use sometimes in particular cases; but the application of them is dangerous. It must be done with the utmost circumspection, or it will be seldom done with success. And yet one would think that this was the principal use of the study of history, by what has been written on the subject. I know not whether Machiavel himself is quite free from defect on this account: he seems to carry the use and application of particular examples sometimes too far. Marius and Catulus passed the Alps, met and defeated the Cimbri beyond the frontiers of Italy. Is it safe to conclude from hence, that whenever one people is invaded by another, the invaded ought to meet and fight the invaders at a distance from their frontiers? Machiavel's countryman, Guicciardin, was aware of the danger that might arise from such an application of examples. Peter of Medicis had involved himself in great difficulties, when those wars and calamities began, which Lewis Sforza first drew and entailed on Italy, by flattering the ambition of Charles the eighth in order to gratify his own, and calling the French into

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that country. Peter owed his distress to his folly in departing from the general tenour of conduct his father Laurence had held, and hoped to relieve himself by imitating his father's example in one particular instance. At a time when the wars with the pope and king of Naples had reduced Laurence to circumstances of great danger, he took the resolution of going to Ferdinand, and of treating in person with that prince. The resolution appears in history imprudent and almost desperate: were we informed of the secret reasons on which this great man acted, it would appear very possibly a wise and safe measure. It succeeded, and Laurence brought back with him publick peace, and private security. As soon as the French troops entered the dominions of Florence, Peter was struck with a panick terrour, went to Charles the eighth, put the port of Leghorn, the fortresses of Pisa, and all the keys of the country, into this prince's hands; whereby he disarmed the Florentine commonwealth, and ruined himself. He was deprived of his authority and driven out of the city, by the just indignation of the magistrates and people: and in the treaty which they made afterward with the king of France, it was stipulated, that Peter should not remain within a hundred miles of the state, nor his brothers within the same distance of the city of Florence. On this occasion Guicciardin observes, how dangerous it is to govern ourselves by particular examples; since to have the same success, we must have the same prudence, and the

the same fortune; and since the example must not only answer the case before us in general, but in every minute circumstance. This is the sense of that admirable historian, and these are his words — " é senza dubio molto pericoloso il " governarsi con gl' esempi, se non concorrono, " non solo in generale, ma in tutti i particulari, " le medesime ragioni; se le cose non sono " regolate con la medesima prudenza, & se " oltre a tutti li altri fondamenti, non, v'ha la " parte sua la medesima fortuna." An observation that Boileau makes, and a rule he lays down in speaking of translations, will properly find their place here, and serve to explain still better what I would establish. " To translate " servilely into modern language an ancient au- " thor phrase by phrase, and word by word, is " preposterous: nothing can be more unlike the " original than such a copy. It is not to show, " it is to disguise the author: and he who has " known him only in this dress, would not know " him in his own. A good writer, instead of " taking this inglorious and unprofitable task upon " him, will jouster contre l'original, rather imitate " than translate, and rather emulate than imitate: " he will transfuse the sense and spirit of the ori- " ginal into his own work, and will endeavour to " write as the ancient author would have wrote, " had he writ in the same language." Now, to improve by examples is to improve by imitation. We must catch the spirit, if we can, and conform ourselves to the reason of them; but we must

must not affect to translate servilely into our conduct, if your lordship will allow me the expression, the particular conduct of those good and great men, whose images history sets before us. Codrus and the Decii devoted themselves to death: one because an oracle had foretold, that the army whose general was killed would be victorious; the others in compliance with a superstition that bore great analogy to a ceremony practised in the old Egyptian church, and added afterward, as many others of the same origin were, to the ritual of the Israelites. These are examples of great magnanimity, to be sure, and of magnanimity employed in the most worthy cause. In the early days of the Athenian and Roman government, when the credit of oracles and all kinds of superstition prevailed, when Heaven was piously thought to delight in blood, and even human blood was shed under wild notions of atonement, propitiation, purgation, expiation, and satisfaction; they who set such examples as these acted a heroical and a rational part too. But if a general should act the same part now, and, in order to secure his victory, get killed as fast as he could, he might pass for a hero, but I am sure he would pass for a madman. Even these examples, however, are of use: they excite us at least to venture our lives freely in the service of our country, by proposing to our imitation men, who devoted themselves to certain death in the service of theirs. They show us what a turn of imagination can operate, and how the

greatest trifle, nay the greatest absurdity, dressed up in the solemn airs of religion, can carry ardour and confidence, or the contrary sentiments, into the breasts of thousands.

These are certain general principles and rules of life and conduct, which always must be true, because they are conformable to the invariable nature of things. He who studies history as he would study philosophy, will soon distinguish and collect them, and by doing so will soon form to himself a general system of ethicks and politicks on the surest foundations, on the trial of these principles and rules in all ages, and on the confirmation of them by universal experience. I said he will distinguish them; for once more I must say, that as to particular modes of action, and measures of conduct, which the customs of different countries, the manners of different ages, and the circumstances of different conjunctures, have appropriated, as it were; it is always ridiculous, or imprudent and dangerous, to employ them. But this is not all. By contemplating the vast variety of particular characters and events; by examining the strange combinations of causes, different, remote, and seemingly opposite, that often concur in producing one effect; and the surprising fertility of one single and uniform cause in the producing of a multitude of effects as different, as remote, and seemingly as opposite; by tracing carefully, as carefully as if the subject he considers were of personal and immediate concern to him, all

the minute and sometimes scarce perceivable circumstances, either in the characters of actors, or in the course of actions, that history enables him to trace, and according to which the success of affairs, even the greatest, is mostly determined; by these, and such methods as these, for I might descend into a much greater detail, a man of parts may improve the study of history to it's proper and principal use; he may sharpen the penetration, fix the attention of his mind, and strengthen his judgment; he may acquire the faculty and the habit of discerning quicker, and looking farther, and of exerting that flexibility, and steadiness, which are necessary to be joined in the conduct of all affairs that depend on the concurrence or opposition of other men.

Mr. Locke, I think, recommends the study of geometry even to those who have no design of being geometricians: and he gives a reason for it, that may be applied to the present case. Such persons may forget every problem that has been proposed, and every solution that they or others have given; but the habit of pursuing long trains of ideas will remain with them, and they will pierce through the mazes of sophism, and discover a latent truth, where persons who have not this habit will never find it.

In this manner the study of history will prepare us for action and observation. History is the ancient author: experience is the modern language. We form our taste on the first, we translate the sense and reason, we transfuse the spirit and force;

but we imitate only the particular graces of the original; we imitate them according to the idiom of our own tongue, that is, we substitute often equivalents in the lieu of them, and are far from affecting to copy them servilely. To conclude, as experience is conversant about the present, and the present enables us to guess at the future; so history is conversant about the past, and by knowing the things that have been, we become better able to judge of the things that are.

This use, my lord, which I make the proper and principal use of the study of history, is not insisted on by those who have writ concerning the method to be followed in this study: and since we propose different ends, we must of course take different ways. Few of their treatises have fallen into my hands: one, the method of Bodin, a man famous in his time, I remember to have read. I took it up with much expectation many years ago; I went through it, and remained extremely disappointed. He might have given almost any other title to his book as properly as that which stands before it. There are not many pages in it that relate any more to his subject than a tedious fifth chapter, wherein he accounts for the characters of nations according to their positions on the globe, and according to the influence of the stars; and assures his reader, that nothing can be more necessary than such a disquisition, "ad "universam historiarum cognitionem, et incorrup-"tum earum judicium." In his method, we are to take first a general view of universal history, and chronology,

chronology, in short abstracts, and then to study all particular histories and systems. Seneca speaks of men who spend their whole lives in learning how to act in life, "dum vitæ instrumenta conquirunt." I doubt that this method of Bodin would conduct us in the same, or as bad a way; would leave us no time for action, or would make us unfit for it. A huge commonplace book, wherein all the remarkable sayings and facts that we find in history are to be registered, may enable a man to talk or write like Bodin, but will never make him a better man, nor enable him to promote, like a useful citizen, the security, the peace, the welfare, or the grandeur of the community to which he belongs. I shall proceed therefore to speak of a method, that leads to such purposes as these directly and certainly, without any regard to the methods that have been prescribed by others.

I think then we must be on our guard against this very affectation of learning, and this very wantonness of curiosity, which the examples and precepts we commonly meet with are calculated to flatter and indulge. We must neither dwell too long in the dark, nor wander about till we lose our way in the light. We are too apt to carry systems of philosophy beyond all our ideas, and systems of history beyond all our memorials. The philosopher begins with reason and ends with imagination. The historian inverts this order: he begins without memorials, and he sometimes ends with them. This silly custom is so prevalent among men of letters who apply themselves to the study of history, and has so much

much prejudice and so much authority on the side of it, that your lordship must give me leave to speak a little more particularly and plainly than I have done, in favour of common sense, against an absurdity which is almost sanctified.

REFLECTIONS

ON THE STATE OF ANCIENT HISTORY.

The nature of man, and the constant course of human affairs, render it impossible that the first ages of any new nation, which forms itself, should afford authentick materials for history. We have none such concerning the originals of any of those nations that actually subsist. Shall we expect to find them concerning the originals of nations dispersed, or extinguished, two or three thousand years ago? If a thread of dark and uncertain traditions, therefore, is made, as it commonly is, the introduction to history, we should touch it lightly, and run swiftly over it, far from insisting on it, either as authors or readers. Such introductions are at best no more than fanciful preludes, that try the instruments, and precede the concert. He must be void of judgment and taste, one would think, who can take the first for true history, or the last for true harmony. And yet so it has been, and so it is, not in Germany and Holland alone; but in Italy, in France, and in England, where genius has abounded, and taste has been long refined. Our great scholars have dealt and deal in fables at least as much as our poets, with this difference

ference to the disadvantage of the former, to whom I may apply the remark as justly as Seneca applied it to the dialecticians—"tristius inepti "sunt. Illi ex professo lasciviunt; hi agere "seipsos aliquid existimant." Learned men, in learned and inquisitive ages, who possessed many advantages that we have not, and among others that of being placed so many centuries nearer the original truths, that are the objects of so much laborious search, despaired of finding them, and gave fair warning to posterity, if posterity would have taken it. The ancient geographers, as Plutarch says in the life of Theseus, when they laid down in their maps the little extent of sea and land that was known to them, left great spaces void. In some of these spaces they wrote, Here are sandy deserts, in others, here are impassable marshes, here is a chain of inhospitable mountains, or here is a frozen ocean. Just so both he and other historians, when they related fabulous originals, were not wanting to set out the bounds beyond which there was neither history nor chronology. Censorinus has preserved the distinction of three æras established by Varro. This learned Roman antiquary did not determine whether the first period had any beginning, but fixed the end of it at the first, that is, according to him, the Ogygian, deluge; which he placed, I think, some centuries backwarder than Julius Africanus thought fit to place it afterward. To this æra of absolute darkness he suppossed that a kind of twilight succeeded,

from the Ogygian deluge to the Olympick æra, and this he called the fabulous age. From this vulgar æra when Coræbus was crowned victor, and long after the true æra when these games were instituted by Iphitus, the Greeks pretend to be able to digest their history with some order, clearness, and certainty: Varro therefore looked on it as the break of day, or the beginning of the historical age. He might do so the rather, perhaps, because he included by it the date he likewise fixed, or, upon recollection, that the elder Cato had fixed, of the foundation of Rome within the period from which he supposed that historical truth was to be found. But yet most certain it is, that the history and chronology of the ages that follow are as confused and uncertain, as the history and chronology of those which immediately precede this æra.

3. The State of ancient profane History.

1. The Greeks did not begin to write in prose till Pherecides of Syros introduced the custom: and Cadmus Milesius was their first historian. Now these men flourished long after the true, or even the vulgar Olympic æra: for Josephus affirms, and in this he has great probability on his side, that Cadmus Milesius, and Acusilaus Argivus, in a word the oldest historians in Greece, were very little more ancient than the expedition of the Persians against the Greeks. As several centuries passed between the Olympic æra

and these first historians, there passed likewise several more between these and the first Greek chronologers. Timæus about the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and Eratosthenes, about that of Ptolemy Evergetes, seem first to have digested the events recorded by them, according to the olympiads. Precedent writers mentioned sometimes the olympiads; but this rule of reckoning was not brought into established use sooner. The rule could not serve to render history more clear and certain till it was followed: it was not followed till about five hundred years after the Olympic æra. There remains therefore no pretence to place the beginning of the historical age so high as Varro placed it, by five hundred years.

Hellanicus indeed and others pretended to give the originals of cities and governments, and to deduce their narrations from great antiquity. Their works are lost, but we can judge how inconsiderable the loss is, by the writings of that age which remain, and by the report of those who had seen the others. For instance, Herodotus was contemporary with Hellanicus. Herodotus was inquisitive enough in all conscience, and proposed to publish all he could learn of the antiquities of the Ionians, Lydians, Phrygians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Medes, and Persians; that is, of almost all the nations who were known in his time to exist. If he wrote Assyriacs, we have them not; but we are sure that this word was used proverbially to signify fabulous legends, soon after

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his time, and when the mode of publishing such relations and histories prevailed among the Greeks.

In the nine books we have, he goes back indeed almost to the Olympic æra, without taking notice of it however; but he goes back only to tell an old woman's tale, of a king who lost his crown for showing his wife naked to his favourite; and from Candaules and Gyges he hastens, or rather he takes a great leap, down to Cyrus.

Something like a thread of history of the Medes and then of the Persians, to the flight of Xerxes, which happened in his own time, is carried on. The events of his own time are related with an air of history. But all accounts of the Greeks as well as the Persians, which precede these, and all the accounts which he gives occasionally of other nations, were drawn up most manifestly on broken, perplexed, and doubtful scraps of tradition. He had neither original records, nor any authentick memorials to guide him, and yet these are the sole foundations of true history. Herodotus flourished, I think, little more than half a century, and Xenophon little more than a whole century, after the death of Cyrus: and yet how various and repugnant are the relations made by these two historians, of the birth, life, and death of this prince? If more histories had come down from these ages to ours, the uncertainty and inutility of them all would be but the more manifest. We should find that Acusilaus rejected the traditions of Hesiod, that Hellanicus contradicted

contradicted Acusilaus, that Ephorus accused Hellanicus, that Timæus accused Ephorus, and all posterior writers Timæus. This is the report of Josephus. But in order to show the ignorance and falshood of all those writers, through whom the traditions of profane antiquity came to the Greeks, I will quote to your lordship a much better authority than that of Josephus; the authority of one who had no prejudice to bias him, no particular cause to defend, nor system of ancient history to establish, and all the helps, as well as talents necessary to make him a competent judge. The man I mean is Strabo.

Speaking of the Massagetæ in his eleventh book he writes to this effect: that no author had given a true account of them, though several had writ of the war that Cyrus waged against them; and that historians had found as little credit in what they had related concerning the affairs of the Persians, Medes, and Syrians: that this was due to their folly; for observing that those who wrote fables professedly were held in esteem, these men imagined they should render their writings more agreeable, if, under the appearance and pretence of true history, they related what they had neither seen nor heard from persons able to give them true information; and that accordingly their only aim had been to dress up pleasing and marvellous relations: that one may better give credit to Hesiod and Homer, when they talk of their heroes, nay even to dramatick poets,

poets, than to Ctesias, Herodotus, Hellanicus, and their followers: that it is not safe to give credit even to the greatest part of the historians who writ concerning Alexander; since they too, encouraged by the greater reputation of this conqueror, by the distance to which he carried his arms, and by the difficulty of disproving what they said of actions performed in regions so remote, were apt to deceive: that indeed when the Roman empire on one side, and the Parthian on the other, came to extend themselves, the truth of things grew to be better known.

You see, my lord, not only how late profane history began to be writ by the Greeks, but how much later it began to be writ with any regard to truth; and consequently what wretched materials the learned men, who arose after the age of Alexander, had to employ, when they are tempted to form systems of ancient history and chronology. We have some remains of that laborious compiler Diodorus Siculus, but do we find in him any thread of ancient history, I mean, that which passed for ancient in his time? What complaints, on the contrary, does he not make of former historians? how frankly does he confess the little and uncertain light he had to follow in his researches? Yet Diodorus, as well as Plutarch, and others, had not only the older Greek historians, but the more modern antiquaries, who pretended to have searched into the records and registers of nations, even at that time

time renowned for their antiquity. Berosus, for instance, and Manetho, one a Babylonian and the other an Egyptian priest, had published the antiquities of their countries in the time of the Ptolemies. Berosus pretended to give the history of four hundred and eighty years. Pliny, if I remember right, for I say this on memory, speaks to this effect in the sixth book of his Natural History: and if it was so, these years were probably years of Nabonassar. Manetho began his history, God knows when, from the progress of Isis, or some other as well ascertained period. He followed the Egyptian traditions of dynasties of gods and demigods; and derived his anecdotes from the first Mercury, who had inscribed them in sacred characters, on antediluvian pillars, antediluvian at least according to our received chronology, from which the second Mercury had transcribed them, and inserted them into his works. We have not these antiquities; for the monk of Viterbo was soon detected: and if we had them, they would either add to our uncertainty, and increase the chaos of learning, or tell us nothing worth our knowledge. For thus I reason. Had they given particular and historical accounts conformable to the scriptures of the Jews, Josephus, Julius Africanus, and Eusebius would have made quite other extracts from their writings, and would have altered and contradicted them less. The accounts they gave therefore were repugnant to sacred writ, or they were defective: they would have established pyrrhonism, or have baulked our curiosity.

2. Of

2. Of sacred history.

What memorials therefore remain to give us light into the originals of ancient nations, and the history of those ages, we commonly call the first ages? The Bible, it will be said; that is, the historical part of it in the Old Testament. But, my lord, even these divine books must be reputed insufficient to the purpose, by every candid and impartial man, who considers either their authority as histories, or the matter they contain. For what are they? and how came they to us? At the time when Alexander carried his arms into Asia, a people of Syria, till then unknown, became known to the Greeks: this people had been slaves to the Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, as the several empires prevailed: ten parts in twelve of them had been transplanted by ancient conquerors, and melted down and lost in the east, several ages before the establishment of the empire that Alexander destroyed: the other two parts had been carried captive to Babylon a little before the same æra. This captivity was not indeed perpetual, like the other; but it lasted so long, and such circumstances, whatever they were, accompanied it, that the captives forgot their country, and even their language, the Hebrew dialect at least and character: and a few of them only could be wrought upon, by the zeal of some particular men, to return home, when the indulgence of the Persian monarchs gave them leave to rebuild their city, and to repeople their ancient patrimony. Even this remnant of the nation

nation did not continue long entire. Another great transmigration followed; and the Jews, that settled under the protection of the Ptolemies, forgot their language in Egypt, as the forefathers of these Jews had forgot theirs in Chaldea. More attached however to their religion in Egypt, for reasons easy to be deduced from the new institutions that prevailed after the captivity among them, than their ancestors had been in Chaldea, a version of their sacred writings was made into Greek at Alexandria, not long after the canon of these scriptures had been finished at Jerusalem; for many years could not intervene between the death of Simon the just, by whom this canon was finished, if he died during the reign of Ptolemy Soter, and the beginning of this famous translation under Ptolemy Philadelphus. The Hellenist Jews reported as many marvellous things to authorise, and even to sanctify this translation, as the other Jews had reported about Esdras who began, and Simon the just who finished, the canon of their scriptures. These holy romances slid into tradition, and tradition became history: the fathers of our christian church did not disdain to employ them. St. Jerome, for instance, laughed at the story of the seventy-two elders, whose translations were found to be, upon comparison, word for word the same, though made separately, and by men who had no communication with one another. But the same St. Jerome, in the same place, quotes Aristeas, one of the guard of Ptolemy Philadelphus, as a real personage.

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The account, pretended to be writ by this Aristeas, of all that passed relating to the translation, was enough for his purpose. This he retained, and he rejected only the more improbable circumstances, which had been added to the tale, and which laid it open to most suspicion. In this he showed great prudence, and better judgment, than that zealous but weak apologist Justin, who believed the whole story himself, and endeavoured to impose it on mankind.

Thus you see my lord, that when we consider these books barely as histories, delivered to us on the faith of a superstitious people, among whom the custom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably, we may be allowed to doubt whether greater credit is to be given to what they tell us concerning the original, compiled in their own country and as it were out of the sight of the rest of the world; than we know, with such a certainty as no scholar presumes to deny, that we ought to give to what they tell us concerning the copy.

The Hellenist Jews were extremely pleased, no doubt, to have their scriptures in a language they understood, and that might spread the fame of their antiquity, and do honour to their nation, among their masters the Greeks. But yet we do not find that the authority of these books prevailed, or that even they were much known among the Pagan world. The reason of this cannot be that the Greeks admired nothing that was not of their own growth, "sua tantum mirantur:" for,

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on the contrary, they were inquisitive and credulous in the highest degree, and they collected and published at least as many idle traditions of other nations, as they propagated of their own. Josephus pretended that Theopompus, a disciple of Isocrates, being about to insert in his history some things he had taken out of holy writ, the poor man became troubled in mind for several days; and that having prayed to God, during an intermission of his illness, to reveal to him the cause of it, he learned in his sleep that this attempt was the cause; upon which he quitted the design, and was cured. If Josephus had been a little more consistent than he is very often, such a story as this would not have been told by one, who was fond, as Jews and Christians in general have been, to create an opinion, that the Gentiles took not their history alone, but their philosophy and all their valuable knowledge, from the Jews. Notwithstanding this story therefore, which is told in the fifteenth book of the Jewish antiquities, and means nothing, or means to show that the divine providence would not suffer anecdotes of sacred to be mingled with profane history; the practice of Josephus himself, and of all those who have had the same design in view, has been to confirm the former by the latter, and at any rate to suppose an appearance at least of conformity between them. We are told Hecateus Abderita, for there were two of that name, writ a history favourable to the Jews: and, not to multiply instances, though I might easily do it,

even Alexander Polyhistor is called in. He is quoted by Josephus, and praised by Eusebius as a man of parts and great variety of learning. His testimony, about the deluge and tower of Babel, is produced by St. Cyril in his first book against Julian: and Justin the apologist and martyr, in his exhortation to the Greeks, makes use of the same authority, among those that mention Moses as a leader and prince of the Jews. Though this Polyhistor, if I remember right what I think I have met with in Suidas, spoke only of a woman he called Moso, "cujus scriptum est lex hebræo-"rum*." Had the Greek historians been conformable to the sacred, I cannot see that their authority, which was not contemporary, would have been of any weight. They might have copied Moses, and so they did Ctesias. But even this was not the case: whatever use a particular writer here and there might make occasionally of the scriptures, certain it is that the Jews continued to be as much despised, and their history to be as generally neglected, nay almost as generally unknown, for a long time at least after the version was made at Alexandria, as they had been before. Apion, an Egyptian, a man of much

* Μωσὼ, γυνὴ Ἑβραία· ἧς ἐστι σύγγραμμα ὁ παρ' Ἑβραίοις νομος· ὡς φησιν Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Μιλήσιος ὁ Πολυΐστωρ. Sui Lex. tom. ii, p. 583.

Ἀλέξανδρος . . ὃς Πολυΐστωρ . . . συνέγραψε βιβλία ἀριθμῷ πρείττω, ἢ περὶ Ῥώμης βιβλία πέντε, ἐν τούτοις λέγει, ὡς γυνὴ γέγονεν Ἑβραία Μωσὼ, ἧς ἐστι σύγγραμμα ὁ παρ' Ἑβραίοις νομος. Id. tom. i, p. 105. Edit. Cantab. 1725.

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erudition, appeared in the world some centuries afterward. He wrote, among other antiquities, those of his own country: and as he was obliged to speak very often of the Jews, he spoke of them in a manner neither much to their honour, nor to that of their histories. He wrote purposely against them: and Josephus attempted afterwards, but Apion was then dead, to refute him. Apion passed, I know, for a vain and noisy pedant; but he passed likewise for a curious, a laborious, and a learned antiquary. If he was cabalistical or superstitious, Josephus was at least as much so as he: and if he flattered Caligula, Josephus introduced himself to the court of Nero and the favour of Poppæa, by no very honourable means, under the protection of Aliturus a player, and a Jew; to say nothing of his applying to Vespasian the prophecies concerning the Messiah, nor of his accompanying Titus to the siege of Jerusalem.

In short, my lord, the Jewish history never obtained any credit in the world, till christianity was established. The foundations of this system being laid partly in these histories, and in the prophecies joined to them or inserted in them, christianity has reflected back upon them an authority which they had not before, and this authority has prevailed wherever christianity has spread. Both Jews and Christians hold the same books in great veneration, while each condemns the other for not understanding, or for abusing them. But I apprehend that the zeal of both

has done much hurt, by endeavouring to extend their authority much farther than is necessary for the support perhaps of Judaism, but to be sure of christianity. I explain myself, that I may offend no pious ear.

Simon, in the preface of his critical history of the Old Testament, cites a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the inspirations of the authors of those books, which the church receives as the word of God, should be extended no farther than to matters purely of doctrine, or to such as have a near and necessary relation to these; and that whenever these authors writ on other subjects, such as Egyptian, Assyrian, or other history, they had no more of the divine assistance than any other persons of piety. This notion of inspirations that came occasionally, that illuminated the minds and guided the hands of the sacred penmen while they were writing one page, and restrained their influence while the same authors were writing another, may be cavilled against: and what is there that may not? But surely it deserves to be treated with respect, since it tends to establish a distinction between the legal, doctrinal, or prophetical parts of the Bible, and the historical: without which distinction it is impossible to establish the first, as evidently and as solidly as the interests of religion require: at least it appears impossible to me, after having examined and considered, as well as I am able, all the trials of this kind that have been made by subtile as well as learned men. The

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Old is said to be the foundation of the New, and so it is in one sense; the system of religion contained in the latter refers to the system of religion contained in the former, and supposes the truth of it. But the authority on which we receive the books of the New Testament is so far from being founded on the authority of the Old Testament, that it is quite independent on it: the New being proved gives authority to the Old, but borrows none from it; and gives this authority to particular parts only. Christ came to fulfil the prophecies; but not to consecrate all the written, any more than the oral, traditions of the Jews. We must believe these traditions as far as they relate to christianity, as far as christianity refers to them, or supposes them necessary; but we can be under no obligation to believe them any farther, since without christianity we should be under no obligation to believe them at all.

It hath been said by Abbadie, and others, "that the accidents which have happened to "alter the texts of the Bible, and to disfigure, "if I may say so, the scriptures in many re- "spects, could not have been prevented without "a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpe- "tual standing miracle is not in the order of "providence." Now I can by no means subscribe to this opinion. It seems evident to my reason, that the very contrary must be true; if we suppose that God acts toward men according to the moral fitness of things: and if we sup-

pose that he acts arbitrarily, we can form no opinion at all. I think that these accidents would not have happened, or that the scriptures would have been preserved entirely in their genuine purity notwithstanding these accidents, if they had been entirely dictated by the Holy Ghost: and the proof of this probable proposition, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom and moral fitness, is obvious and easy. But these scriptures are not so come down to us: they are come down broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations, and transpositions, made we neither know when, nor by whom; and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book, on whose authority men have agreed to rely.

This being so, my lord, what hypothesis shall we follow? Shall we adhere to some such distinction as I have mentioned? Shall we say, for instance, that the scriptures were written originally by the authors to whom they are vulgarly ascribed, but that these authors writ nothing by inspiration, except the legal, the doctrinal, and the prophetical parts, and that in every other respect their authority is purely human, and therefore fallible? Or shall we say that these histories are nothing more than compilations of old traditions, and abridgments of old records made in later times, as they appear to every one who reads them without prepossession, and with attention? Shall we add, that whichever of these probabilities be true, we may believe, consistently with either,

either, notwithstanding the decision of any divines, who know no more than you or I, or any other man, of the order of providence, that all those parts and passages of the Old Testament, which contain prophecies, or matters of law or doctrine, and which were from the first of such importance in the designs of providence, to all future generations, and even to the whole race of mankind, have been from the first the peculiar care of providence? Shall we insist that such particular parts and passages, which are plainly marked out and sufficiently confirmed by the system of the christian revelation, and by the completion of the prophecies, have been preserved from corruption by ways impenetrable to us, amidst all the changes and chances to which the books wherein they are recorded have been exposed; and that neither original writers, nor later compilers, have been suffered to make any essential alterations, such as would have falsified the law of God and the principles of the Jewish and Christian religions, in any of these divine fundamental truths? Upon such hypotheses, we may assert without scruple, that the genealogies and histories of the Old Testament are in no respect sufficient foundations for a chronology from the beginning of time, nor for universal history. But then the same hypotheses will secure the infallibility of scripture authority as far as religion is concerned. Faith and reason may be reconciled a little better than they commonly are. I may deny that the Old Testament is transmitted to us under all the conditions of

an authentick history, and yet be at liberty to maintain, that the passages in it which establish original sin, which seem favourable to the doctrine of the Trinity, which foretel the coming of the Messiah, and all others of similar kind, are come down to us as they were originally dictated by the Holy Ghost.

In attributing the whole credibility of the Old Testament to the authority of the New, and in limiting the authenticity of the Jewish scriptures to those parts alone that concern law, doctrine, and prophecy, by which their chronology and the far greatest part of their history are excluded, I will venture to assure your lordship, that I do not assume so much, as is assumed in every hypothesis that fixes the divine seal of inspiration to the whole canon; that rests the whole proof on Jewish veracity; and that pretends to account particularly and positively for the descent of these ancient writings in their present state.

Another reason, for which I have insisted the rather on the distinction so often mentioned, is this. I think we may find very good foundation for it even in the Bible: and though this be a point very little attended to, and much disguised, it would not be hard to show, upon great inducements of probability, that the law and the history were far from being blended together as they now stand in the Pentateuch, even from the time of Moses down to that of Esdras. But the principal and decisive reason for separating in such manner the legal, doctrinal, and prophetical parts, from the historical,

historical, is the necessity of having some rule to go by: and, I protest, I know of none that is yet agreed upon. I content myself therefore to fix my opinion concerning the authority of the Old Testament in this manner, and carry it thus far only. We must do so, or we must enter into that labyrinth of dispute and contradiction, wherein even the most orthodox Jews and Christians have wandered so many ages, and still wander. It is strange, but it is true; not only the Jews differ from the Christians, but Jews and Christians both differ among themselves concerning almost every point that is necessary to be certainly known and agreed upon, in order to establish the authority of books which both have received already as authentick and sacred. So that whoever takes the pains to read what learned men have writ on this subject will find, that they leave the matter as doubtful as they took it up. Who were the authors of these scriptures, when they were published, how they were composed and preserved, or renewed, to use a remarkable expression of the famous Huet in his Demonstration; in fine, how they were lost during the captivity, and how they were retrieved after it, are all matters of controversy to this day.

It would be easy for me to descend into a greater detail, and to convince your lordship of what I have been saying in general by an induction of particulars, even without any other help than that of a few notes, which I took when I applied myself to this examination, and which now lie before

fore me. But such a digression would carry me too far: and I fear that you will think I have said already more than enough upon this part of my subject. I go on therefore to observe to your lordship, that if the history of the Old Testament was as exact and as authentick, as the ignorance and impudence of some rabbies have made them assert that it is: if we could believe with them, that Moses wrote every syllable in the Pentateuch as it now stands, or that all the Psalms were written by David: nay, if we could believe, with Philo and Josephus, that Moses wrote the account of his own death and sepulture, and made a sort of funeral panegyrick on himself, as we find them in the last chapter of Deuteronomy; yet still would I venture to assert, that he who expects to find a system of chronology, or a thread of history, or sufficient materials for either, in the books of the Old Testament, expects to find what the authors of these books, whoever they were, never intended. They are extracts of genealogies, not genealogies: extracts of histories, not histories. The Jews themselves allow their genealogies to be very imperfect, and produce examples of omissions and errours in them, which denote sufficiently that these genealogies are extracts, wherein every generation in the course of descent is not mentioned. I have read somewhere, perhaps in the works of St. Jerome, that this father justifies the opinion of those who think it impossible to fix any certain chronology on that of the Bible: and this opinion

nion will be justified still better, to the understanding of every man who considers how grossly the Jews blunder whenever they meddle with chronology; for this plain reason, because their scriptures are imperfect in this respect, and because they rely on their oral, to rectify and supply their written, traditions: that is, they rely on traditions compiled long after the canon of their scriptures, but deemed by them of equal antiquity and authority. Thus, for instance, Daniel and Simon the just, according to them, were members at the same time of the great synagogue, which began and finished the canon of the Old Testament, under the presidency of Esdras. This Esdras was the prophet Malachi. Darius the son of Hystaspes was Artaxerxes Longimanus; he was Ahasuerus, and he was the same Darius whom Alexander conquered. This may serve as a sample of Jewish chronology, formed on their scriptures which afford insufficient lights, and on their traditions which afford false lights. We are indeed more correct, and come nearer to the truth in these instances, perhaps in some others, because we make use of profane chronology to help us. But profane chronology is itself so modern, so precarious, that this help does not reach to the greatest part of that time to which sacred chronology extends; that when it begins to help, it begins to perplex us too; and finally, that even with this help we should not have had so much as the appearance

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of a complete chronological system, and the same may be said of universal history, if learned men had not proceeded very wisely, on one uniform maxim, from the first ages of christianity, when a custom of sanctifying profane learning, as well as profane rites, which the Jews had imprudently laid aside, was taken up by the Christians. The maxim I mean is this, that profane authority be admitted without scruple or doubt, whenever it says, or whenever it can be made to say, if not "totidem verbis," yet "totidem syllabis," or "totidem literis" at least, or whenever it can be made by any interpretation to mean, what confirms, or supplies in a consistent manner, the holy writ; and that the same authority be rejected, when nothing of this kind can be done, but the contradiction or inconsistency remains irreconcilable. Such a liberty as this would not be allowed in any other case; because it supposes the very thing that is to be proved. But we see it taken, very properly to be sure, in favour of sacred and infallible writings, when they are compared with others.

In order to perceive with the utmost evidence, that the scope and design of the author or authors of the Pentateuch, and of the other books of the Old Testament, answer as little the purpose of antiquaries in history, as in chronology, it will be sufficient briefly to call to mind the sum of what they relate, from the creation of the world to the establishment of the Persian empire. If

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the antediluvian world continued one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years, and if the vocation of Abraham is to be placed four hundred and twenty-six years below the deluge, these twenty centuries make almost two thirds of the period mentioned: and the whole history of them is comprised in eleven short chapters of Genesis; which is certainly the most compendious extract that ever was made. If we examine the contents of these chapters, do we find any thing like a universal history, or so much as an abridgment of it? Adam and Eve were created, they broke the commandment of God, they were driven out of the garden of Eden, one of their sons killed his brother, but their race soon multiplied and peopled the Earth. What geography now have we, what history of this antediluvian world? Why, none. The sons of God, it is said, lay with the daughters of men, and begot giants, and God drowned all the inhabitants of the Earth, except one family. After this we read that the Earth was repeopled; but these children of one family were divided into several languages, even while they lived together, spoke the same language, and were employed in the same work. Out of one of the countries into which they dispersed themselves, Chaldea, God called Abraham some time afterward, with magnificent promises, and conducted him to a country called Chanaan. Did this author, my lord, intend an universal history? Certainly not. The tenth chapter of Genesis names indeed some of the generations

nerations descending from the sons of Noah, some of the cities founded, and some of the countries planted by them. But what are bare names, naked of circumstances, without descriptions of countries, or relations of events? They furnish matter only for guess and dispute; and even the similitude of them, which is often used as a clew to lead us to the discovery of historical truth, has notoriously contributed to propagate errour, and to increase the perplexity of ancient tradition. These imperfect and dark accounts have not furnished matter for guess and dispute alone; but a much worse use has been made of them by Jewish rabbies, Christian fathers, and Mahometan doctors, in their profane extensions of this part of the Mosaic history. The creation of the first man is described by some, as if, Preadamites, they had assisted at it. They talk of his beauty as if they had seen him, of his gigantick size as if they had measured him, and of his prodigious knowledge as if they had conversed with him. They point out the very spot where Eve laid her head the first time he enjoyed her. They have minutes of the whole conversation between this mother of mankind, who damned her children before she bore them, and the serpent. Some are positive that Cain quarrelled with Abel about a point of doctrine, and others affirm that the dispute rose about a girl. A great deal of such stuff may be easily collected about Enoch, about Noah, and about the sons of Noah; but I wave any farther mention of such impertinencies as

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Bonzes or Talapoins would almost blush to relate. Upon the whole matter, if we may guess at the design of an author by the contents of his book, the design of Moses, or of the author of the history ascribed to him, in this part of it, was to inform the people of Israel of their descent from Noah by Sem, and of Noah's from Adam by Seth; to illustrate their original; to establish their claim to the land of Chanaan, and to justify all the cruelties committed by Joshua in the conquest of the Chanaanites, in whom, says Bochart, "the prophecy of Noah was completed, when "they were subdued by the Israelites, who had "been so long slaves to the Egyptians."

Allow me to make, as I go along, a short reflection or two on this prophecy, and the completion of it, as they stand recorded in the Pentateuch, out of many that might be made. The terms of the prophecy then are not very clear: and the curse pronounced in it contradicts all our notions of order and of justice. One is tempted to think, that the patriarch was still drunk; and that no man in his senses could hold such language, or pass such a sentence. Certain it is, that no writer but a Jew could impute to the œconomy of divine providence the accomplishment of such a prediction, nor make the Supreme Being the executor of such a curse.

Ham alone offended; Chanaan was innocent; for the Hebrew and other doctors, who would make the son an accomplice with his father, affirm

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not only without, but against the express authority of the text. Chanaan was however alone cursed: and he became, according to his grandfather's prophecy, "a servant of servants," that is, the vilest and worst of slaves (for I take these words in a sense, if not the most natural, the most favourable to the prophecy, and the least absurd) to Sem, though not to Japhet, when the Israelites conquered Palestine; to one of his uncles, not to his brethren. Will it be said—it has been said—that where we read Chanaan we are to understand Ham, whose brethren Sem and Japhet were? At this rate, we shall never know what we read: as these criticks never care what they say. Will it be said—this has been said too—that Ham was punished in his posterity, when Chanaan was cursed, and his descendants were exterminated? But who does not see that the curse, and the punishment, in this case, fell on Chanaan and his posterity, exclusively of the rest of the posterity of Ham; and were therefore the curse and punishment of the son, not of the father, properly? The descendants of Mesraim, another of his sons, were the Egyptians: and they were so far from being servants of servants to their cousins the Semites, that these were servants of servants to them, during more than four-score years. Why the posterity of Chanaan was to be deemed an accursed race, it is easy to account; and I have mentioned it just now. But it is not so easy to account, why the posterity of the righteous Sem, that great example of filial reverence,

reverence, became slaves to another branch of the family of Ham.

It would not be worth while to lengthen this tedious letter, by setting down any more of the contents of the history of the Bible. Your lordship may please to call the substance of it to your mind, and your native candour and love of truth will oblige you then to confess, that these sacred books do not aim, in any part of them, at any thing like universal chronology and history. They contain a very imperfect account of the Israelites themselves; of their settlement in the land of promise, of which, by the way, they never had entire, and scarce ever peaceable possession; of their divisions, apostasies, repentances, relapses, triumphs, and defeats, under the occasional government of their judges, and under that of their kings; of the Galilean and Samaritan captivities, into which they were carried by the kings of Assyria, and of that which was brought on the remnant of this people, when the kingdom of Judah was destroyed by those princes, who governed the empire founded on the union of Nineveh and Babylon. These things are all related, your lordship knows, in a very summary and confused manner: and we learn so little of other nations by these accounts, that if we did not borrow some light from the traditions of other nations, we should scarce understand them. One particular observation, and but one, I will make to show what knowledge in the history of mankind,

and in the computation of time, may be expected from these books. The Assyrians were their neighbours, powerful neighbours, with whom they had much and long to do. Of this empire therefore, if of any thing, we might hope to find some satisfactory accounts. What do we find? The scripture takes no notice of any Assyrian kingdom, till just before the time when profane history makes that empire to end. Then we hear of Phul, of Teglath-Phalasser, who was perhaps the same person, and of Salmanaser, who took Samaria in the twelfth of the æra of Nabonnasser, that is, twelve years after the Assyrian empire was no more. Senacherib succeeds to him, and Asserhaddon to Senacherib. What shall we say to this apparent contrariety? If the silence of the Bible creates a strong presumption against the first, may not the silence of profane authority create some against the second Assyrian monarchs? The pains that are taken to persuade, that there is room enough between Sardanapalus and Cyrus for the second, will not resolve the difficulty. Something much more plausible may be said, but even this will be hypothetical, and liable to great contradiction. So that, upon the whole matter, the scriptures are so far from giving us light into general history, that they increase the obscurity even of those parts to which they have the nearest relation. We have therefore neither in profane nor in sacred authors such authentick, clear, distinct, and

and full accounts of the originals of ancient nations, and of the great events of those ages that are commonly called the first ages, as deserve to go by the name of history, or as afford sufficient materials for chronology and history.

I might now proceed to observe to your lordship how this has happened, not only by the necessary consequences of human nature, and the ordinary course of human affairs, but by the policy, artifice, corruption, and folly of mankind. But this would be to heap digression upon digression, and to presume too much on your patience. I shall therefore content myself to apply these reflections on the state of ancient history to the study of history, and to the method to be observed in it, as soon as your lordship has rested yourself a little after reading, and I after writing so long a letter.

LETTER IV.

I. That there is in history sufficient authenticity to render it useful, notwithstanding all objections to the contrary.

II. Of the method and due restrictions to be observed in the study of it.

WHETHER the letter I now begin to write will be long or short, I know not: but I find my memory is refreshed, my imagination warmed, and matter flows in so fast upon me, that I have not time to press it close. Since therefore you have provoked me to write, you must be content to take what follows.

I have observed already that we are apt naturally to apply to ourselves what has happened to other men, and that examples take their force from hence; as well those which history, as those which experience, offers to our reflection. What we do not believe to have happened therefore, we shall not thus apply: and for want of the same application, such examples will not have the same effect. Ancient history, such ancient history as I have described, is quite unfit therefore in this respect to answer the ends that every reasonable man should propose to himself in this study; because such ancient history will never gain sufficient credit with any reasonable man. A tale well told, or a comedy or a tragedy well wrought up, may have a momentary effect upon the mind, by heating

heating the imagination, surprising the judgment and affecting strongly the passions. The Athenians are said to have been transported into a kind of martial phrenzy by the representation of a tragedy of Æschylus, and to have marched under this influence from the theatre to the plains of Marathon. These momentary impressions might be managed, for aught I know, in such manner as to contribute a little, by frequent repetitions of them, towards maintaining a kind of habitual contempt of folly, detestation of vice, and admiration of virtue in well-policed commonwealths. But then these impressions cannot be made, nor this little effect be wrought, unless the fables bear an appearance of truth. When they bear this appearance, reason connives at the innocent fraud of imagination; reason dispenses, in favour of probability, with those strict rules of criticism, that she has established to try the truth of fact: but, after all, she receives these fables as fables; and as such only she permits imagination to make the most of them. If they pretended to be history, they would be soon subjected to another and more severe examination. What may have happened, is the matter of an ingenious fable: what has happened, is that of an authentic history: the impressions which one or the other makes are in proportion. When imagination grows lawless and wild, rambles out of the precincts of nature, and tells of heroes and giants, fairies and enchanters, of events and of phænomena repugnant to universal experience, to our clearest

and most distinct ideas, and to all the known laws of nature, reason does not connive a moment; but, far from receiving such narrations as historical, she rejects them as unworthy to be placed even among the fabulous. Such narrations therefore cannot make the slightest momentary impressions on a mind fraught with knowledge and void of superstition. Imposed by authority, and assisted by artifice, the delusion hardly prevails over common sense; blind ignorance almost sees, and rash superstition hesitates: nothing less than enthusiasm and phrenzy can give credit to such histories, or apply such examples. Don Quixote believed; but even Sancho doubted.

What I have said will not be much controverted by any man, who has read Amadis of Gaul, or has examined our ancient traditions without prepossession. The truth is, the principal difference between them seems to be this. In Amadis of Gaul, we have a thread of absurdities, that are invented without any regard to probability, and that lay no claim to belief: ancient traditions are a heap of fables, under which some particular truths, inscrutable, and therefore useless to mankind, may lie concealed; which have a just pretence to nothing more, and yet impose themselves upon us, and become, under the venerable name of ancient history, the foundations of modern fables, the materials with which so many systems of fancy have been erected.

But now, as men are apt to carry their judgments into extremes, there are some that will be

be ready to insist that all history is fabulous, and that the very best is nothing better than a probable tale artfully contrived, and plausibly told, wherein truth and falsehood are indistinguishably blended together. All the instances, and all the commonplace arguments, that Bayle and others have employed to establish this sort of Pyrrhonism, will be quoted: and from thence it will be concluded, that if the pretended histories of the first ages, and of the originals of nations, be too improbable and too ill vouched to procure any degree of belief, those histories that have been writ later, that carry a greater air of probability, and that boast even contemporary authority, are at leaft insufficient to gain that degree of firm belief, which is necessary to render the study of them useful to mankind. But here that happens, which oftens happens: the premises are true, and the conclusion is false: because a general axiom is established precariously on a certain number of partial observations. This matter is of consequence; for it tends to ascertain the degrees of assent, that we may give to history.

I agree then that history has been purposely and systematically falsified in all ages, and that partiality and prejudice have occasioned both voluntary and involuntary errours even in the best. Let me say without offence, my lord, since I may say it with truth, and am able to prove it, that ecclesiastical authority has led the way to this corruption in all ages, and all religions. How

monstrous were the absurdities that the priesthood imposed on the ignorance and superstition of mankind in the Pagan world, concerning the originals of religions and governments, their institutions and rites, their laws and customs? What opportunities had they for such impositions, while the keeping the records and collecting the traditions was in so many nations the peculiar office of this order of men? A custom highly extolled by Josephus, but plainly liable to the grossest frauds, and even a temptation to them. If the foundations of Judaism and Christianity have been laid in truth, yet what numberless fables have been invented to raise, to embellish, and to support these structures, according to the interest and taste of the several architects? That the Jews have been guilty of this will be allowed: and, to the shame of christians, if not of christianity, the fathers of one church have no right to throw the first stone at the fathers of the other. Deliberate systematical lying has been practised and encouraged from age to age; and among all the pious frauds that have been employed to maintain a reverence and zeal for their religion in the minds of men, this abuse of history has been one of the principal and most successful: an evident and experimental proof, by the way, of what I have insisted upon so much, the aptitude and natural tendency of history to form our opinions, and to settle our habits. This righteous expedient was in so much use and repute in the Greek church, that one Metaphrastus wrote a

treatise

treatise on the art of composing holy romances. The fact, if I remember right, is cited by Baillet, in his book of the lives of the saints. He and other learned men of the Roman church have thought it of service to their cause, since the resurrection of letters, to detect some impostures, and to depose, or to unniche, according to the French expression, now and then a reputed saint: but they seem in doing this to mean no more than a sort of composition: they give up some fables, that they may defend others with greater advantage, and they make truth serve as a stalking-horse to errour. The same spirit that prevailed in the Eastern church, prevailed in the Western, and prevails still. A strong proof of it appeared lately in the country where I am. A sudden fury of devotion seized the people of Paris for a little priest *, undistinguished during his life, and dubbed a saint by the Jansenists after his death. Had the first minister been a Jansenist, the saint had been a saint still. All France had kept his festival: and since there are thousands of eye-witnesses ready to attest the truth of all the miracles supposed to have been wrought at his tomb, notwithstanding the discouragement which these zealots have met with from the government; we may assure ourselves, that these silly impostures would have been transmitted in all the solemn pomp of history from the knaves of this age to the fools of the next.

* The Abbé Paris.

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This lying spirit has gone forth from ecclesiastical to other historians: and I might fill many pages with instances of extravagant fables, that have been invented in several nations, to celebrate their antiquity, to ennoble their originals, and to make them appear illustrious in the arts of peace and the triumphs of war. When the brain is well heated, and devotion or vanity, the semblance of virtue or real vice, and, above all, disputes and contests, have inspired that complication of passions we term zeal, the effects are much the same, and history becomes very often a lying panegyrick or a lying satire; for different nations, or different parties in the same nation, belie one another without any respect for truth, as they murder one another without any regard to right, or sense of humanity. Religious zeal may boast this horrid advantage over civil zeal, that the effects of it have been more sanguinary, and the malice more unrelenting. In another respect they are more alike, and keep a nearer proportion: different religions have not been quite so barbarous to one another as sects of the same religion; and, in like manner, nation has had better quarter from nation, than party from party. But, in all these controversies, men have pushed their rage beyond their own and their adversaries lives: they have endeavoured to interest posterity in their quarrels, and by rendering history subservient to this wicked purpose, they have done their utmost to perpetuate scandal, and to immortalise their animosity. The

Heathen taxed the Jews even with idolatry; the Jews joined with the Heathen to render christianity odious: but the church, who beat them at their own weapons during these contests, has had this further triumph over them, as well as over the several sects that have arisen within her own pale: the works of those who have writ against her have been destroyed; and whatever she advanced, to justify herself and to defame her adversaries, is preserved in her annals, and the writings of her doctors.

The charge of corrupting history, in the cause of religion, has been always committed to the most famous champions, and greatest saints of each church; and, if I was not more afraid of tiring than of scandalising your lordship, I could quote to you examples of modern churchmen, who have endeavoured to justify foul language by the New Testament, and cruelty by the Old: nay, what is execrable beyond imagination, and what strikes horrour into every mind that entertains due sentiments of the Supreme Being, God himself has been cited for rallying and insulting Adam after his fall. In other cases, this charge belongs to the pedants of every nation, and the tools of every party. What accusations of idolatry and superstition have not been brought, and aggravated against the Mahometans? Those wretched Christians who returned from those wars, so improperly called the holy wars, rumoured these stories about the West: and you may find, in some of the old chroniclers and romance writers,

ters, as well as poets, the Saracens called Paynims; though surely they were much further off from any suspicion of polytheism, than those who called them by that name. When Mahomet the second took Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the Mahometans began to be a little better, and but a little better known, than they had been before, to these parts of the world. But their religion, as well as their customs and manners, was strangely misrepresented by the Greek refugees that fled from the Turks: and the terrour and hatred which this people had inspired by the rapidity of their conquests, and by their ferocity, made all these misrepresentations universally pass for truths. Many such instances may be collected from Maraccio's refutation of the Koran; and Relandus has published a very valuable treatise on purpose to refute these calumnies, and to justify the Mahometans. Does not this example incline your lordship to think, that the Heathens, and the Arians, and other heretics, would not appear quite so absurd in their opinions, nor so abominable in their practice, as the orthodox Christians have represented them; if some Relandus could arise, with the materials necessary to their justification in his hands? He who reflects on the circumstances that attended letters, from the time when Constantine, instead of uniting the characters of emperor and sovereign pontiff in himself when he became Christian, as they were united in him and all the other emperors in the Pagan system of government, gave so much independent

dependent wealth and power to the clergy, and the means of acquiring so much more: he who carries these reflections on through all the latter empire, and through those ages of ignorance and superstition, wherein it was hard to say which was greatest, the tyranny of the clergy or the servility of the laity: he who considers the extreme severity, for instance, of the laws made by Theodosius in order to stifle every writing that the orthodox clergy, that is, the clergy then in fashion, disliked; or the character and influence of such a priest as Gregory called the great, who proclaimed war to all heathen learning in order to promote Christian verity; and flattered Brunehault, and abetted Phocas: he who considers all these things, I say, will not be at a loss to find the reasons, why history, both that which was writ before, and a great part of that which has been writ since the christian æra, is come to us so imperfect and so corrupt.

When the imperfection is due to a total want of memorials, either because none were originally written, or because they have been lost by devastations of countries, extirpations of people, and other accidents in a long course of time; or because zeal, malice, and policy have joined their endeavours to destroy them purposely; we must be content to remain in our ignorance, and there is no great harm in that. Secure from being deceived, I can submit to be uninformed. But when there is not a total want of memorials, when some have been lost or destroyed, and others have

have been preserved and propagated, then we are in danger of being deceived: and therefore he must be very implicit indeed, who receives for true the history of any religion or nation, and much more that of any sect or party, without having the means of confronting it with some other history. A reasonable man will not be thus implicit. He will not establish the truth of history on single, but on concurrent testimony. If there be none such, he will doubt absolutely: if there be a little such, he will proportion his assent or dissent accordingly. A small gleam of light, borrowed from foreign anecdotes, serves often to discover a whole system of falshood: and even they who corrupt history frequently betray themselves by their ignorance or inadvertency. Examples whereof I could easily produce. Upon the whole matter, in all these cases we cannot be deceived essentially, unless we please; and therefore there is no reason to establish Pyrrhonism, that we may avoid the ridicule of credulity.

In all other cases, there is less reason still to do so; for when histories and historical memorials abound, even those that are false serve to the discovery of the truth. Inspired by different passions, and contrived for opposite purposes, they contradict; and contradicting, they convict one another. Criticism separates the ore from the dross, and extracts from various authors a series of true history, which could not have been found entire in any one of them, and will command

mand our assent, when it is formed with judgment and represented with candour. If this may be done, as it has been done sometimes, with the help of authors who writ on purpose to deceive; how much more easily and more effectually may it be done, with the help of those who paid a greater regard to truth! In a multitude of writers there will be always some, either incapable of gross prevarication from the fear of being discovered, and of acquiring infamy while they seek for fame; or else attached to truth upon a nobler and surer principle. It is certain that these, even the last of them, are fallible. Bribed by some passion or other, the former may venture now and then to propagate a falshood, or to disguise a truth; like the painter that drew in profile, as Lucian says, the picture of a prince that had but one eye. Montagne objects to the memorials of du Bellay, that though the gross of the facts be truly related, yet these authors turned every thing they mentioned to the advantage of their master, and mentioned nothing which could not be so turned. The old fellow's words are worth quoting.------De contourner le jugement des événemens souvent contre raison á notre avantage, & d'obmettre tout ce qu'il y a de chatouilleux en la vie de leur maistre, ils en font mestier." These, and such as these, deviate occasionally and voluntarily from truth; but even they who are attached to it the most religiously may slide sometimes into involuntary errour. In matters of history we prefer very justly contemporary

contemporary authority; and yet contemporary authors are the most liable to be warped from the straight rule of truth, in writing on subjects which have affected them strongly, " et quorum " pars magna fuerunt." I am so persuaded of this from what I have felt in myself, and observed in others, that if life and health enough fall to my share, and I am able to finish what I meditate, a kind of history, from the late queen's accession to the throne to the peace of Utrecht, therewill be no materials that I shall examine more scrupulously and severely, than those of the time when the events to be spoken of were in transaction. But though the writers of these two sorts, both of whom pay as much regard to truth as the various infirmities of our nature admits, are fallible; yet this fallibility will not be sufficient to give colour to Pyrrhonism. Where their sincerity as to fact is doubtful, we strike out truth by the confrontation of different accounts: as we strike out sparks of fire by the collision of flints and steel. Where their judgments are suspicious of partiality, we may judge for ourselves; or adopt their judgments after weighing them with certain grains of allowance. A little natural sagacity will proportion these grains according to the particular circumstances of the authors, or their general characters; for even these influence. Thus Montagne pretends, but he exaggerates a little, that Guicciardin nowhere ascribes any one action to a virtuous, but every one to a vicious principle. Something like this has been reproached to Tacitus: and,

notwithstanding all the sprightly loose observations of Montagne in one of his essays, where he labours to prove the contrary, read Plutarch's comparisons in what language you please, I am of Bodin's mind, you will perceive they were made by a Greek. In short, my lord, the favourable opportunities of corrupting history have been often interrupted and are now over in so many countries, that truth penetrates even into those where lying continues still to be part of the policy ecclesiastical and civil; or where, to say the best we can say, truth is never suffered to appear, till she has passed through hands, out of which she seldom returns entire and undefiled.

But it is time I should conclude this head, under which I have touched some of those reasons that show the folly of endeavouring to establish universal Pyrrhonism in matters of history, because there are few histories without some lies, and none without some mistakes; and that prove the body of history which we possess, since ancient memorials have been so critically examined, and modern memorials have been so multiplied, to contain in it such a probable series of events, easily distinguishable from the improbable, as force the assent of every man who is in his senses, and are therefore sufficient to answer all the purposes of the study of history. I might have appealed perhaps, without entering into the argument at all, to any man of candour, whether his doubts concerning the truth of history have hindered him from applying the examples he has

met with in it, and from judging of the present, and sometimes of the future, by the past? Whether he has not been touched with reverence and admiration, at the virtue and wisdom of some men, and of some ages; and whether he has not felt indignation and contempt for others? Whether Epaminondas or Phocion, for instance, the Decii, or the Scipios, have not raised in his mind a flame of publick spirit, and private virtue? and whether he has not shuddered with horrour at the proscriptions of Marius and Sylla, at the treachery of Theodotus and Achillas, and at the consummate cruelty of an infant king? "Quis "non contra Marii arma, et contra Syllæ pro- "scriptionem concitatur? Quis non Theodoto, "et Achillæ, et ipsi puero, non puerile auso "facinus, infestus est?" If all this be a digression therefore, your lordship will be so good as to excuse it.

II. What has been said concerning the multiplicity of histories, and of historical memorials, wherewith our libraries abound since the resurrection of letters happened, and the art of printing began, puts me in mind of another general rule, that ought to be observed by every man who intends to make a real improvement, and to become wiser as well as better, by the study of history. I hinted at this rule in a former letter, where I said that we should neither grope in the dark, nor wander in the light. History must have a certain degree of probability and authenticity, or the examples we find in it will not

not carry a force sufficient to make due impressions on our minds, nor to illustrate nor to strengthen the precepts of philosophy and the rules of good policy. But besides, when histories have this necessary authenticity and probability, there is much discernment to be employed in the choice and the use we make of them. Some are to be read, some are to be studied; and some may be neglected entirely, not only without detriment, but with advantage. Some are the proper objects of one man's curiosity, some of another's, and some of all men's; but all history is not an object of curiosity for any man. He who improperly, wantonly, and absurdly makes it so, indulges a sort of canine appetite: the curiosity of one, like the hunger of the other, devours ravenously and without distinction whatever falls in it's way; but neither of them digests. They heap crudity upon crudity, and nourish and improve nothing but their distemper. Some such characters I have known, though it is not the most common extreme into which men are apt to fall. One of them I knew in this country. He joined, to a more than athletic strength of body, a prodigious memory; and to both a prodigious industry. He had read almost constantly twelve or fourteen hours a day, for five and twenty or thirty years; and had heaped together as much learning as could be crowded into a head. In the course of my acquaintance with him, I con-

sulted him once or twice, not oftener; for I found this mass of learning of as little use to me as to the owner. The man was communicative enough; but nothing was distinct in his mind. How could it be otherwise? he had never spared time to think, all was employed in reading. His reason had not the merit of common mechanism. When you press a watch or pull a clock, they answer your question with precision; for they repeat exactly the hour of the day, and tell you neither more nor less than you desire to know. But when you asked this man a question, he overwhelmed you by pouring forth all that the several terms or words of your question recalled to his memory: and if he omitted any thing, it was that very thing to which the sense of the whole question should have led him and confined him. To ask him a question, was to wind up a spring in his memory, that rattled on with vast rapidity, and confused noise, till the force of it was spent: and you went away with all the noise in your ears, stunned and uninformed. I never left him that I was not ready to say to him, "Dieu vous fasse la grace de devenir moins "savant!" a wish that la Mothe le Vayer mentions upon some occasion or other, and that he would have done well to have applied to himself upon many.

He who reads with discernment and choice, will acquire less learning, but more knowledge: and as this knowledge is collected with design,

and cultivated with art and method, it will be at all times of immediate and ready use to himself and others.

> Thus useful arms in magazines we place,
> All rang'd in order; and dispos'd with grace:
> Nor thus alone the curious eye to please;
> But to be found, when need requires, with ease.

You remember the verses, my lord, in our friend's Essay on Criticism, which was the work of his childhood almost; but is such a monument of good sense and poetry as no other, that I know, has raised in his riper years.

He who reads without this discernment and choice, and, like Bodin's pupil, resolves to read all, will not have time, no nor capacity neither, to do any thing else. He will not be able to think, without which it is impertinent to read; nor to act, without which it is impertinent to think. He will assemble materials with much pains, and purchase them at much expense, and have neither leisure nor skill to frame them into proper scantlings, or to prepare them for use. To what purpose should he husband his time, or learn architecture? he has no design to build. But then to what purpose all these quarries of stone, all these mountains of sand and lime, all these forests of oak and deal? "Magno impendio temporum, magna alienarum "aurium molestia, laudatio hæc constat, O "hominem literatum! Simus hoc titulo rusti- "ciore contenti, O virum bonum!" We may

add, and Seneca might have added in his own style, and according to the manners and characters of his own age, another title as rustick, and as little in fashion, " O virum sapientia sua sim-" plicem, et simplicitate sua sapientem ? O virum " utilem sibi, suis, reipublicæ, et humano ge-" neri !" I have said perhaps already, but no matter, it cannot be repeated too often, that the drift of all philosophy, and of all political speculations, ought to be the making us better men and better citizens. Those studies, which have no intention toward improving our moral characters, have no pretence to be styled philosophical. " Quis est enim," says Tully in his Offices, " qui nullis officii præceptis, tradendis, " philosophum se audeat dicere ?" Whatever political speculations, instead of preparing us to be useful to society, and to promote the happiness of mankind, are only systems for gratifying private ambition, and promoting private interests at the publick expense; all such, I say, deserve to be burnt, and the authors of them to starve, like Machiavel, in a jail.

LETTER V.

I. The great use of history, properly so called, as distinguished from the writings of mere annalists and antiquaries.

II. Greek and Roman historians.

III. Some idea of a complete history.

IV. Further cautions to be observed in this study, and the regulation of it according to the different professions and situations of men: above all, the use to be made of it (1) by divines, and (2) by those who are called to the service of their country.

I Remember my last letter ended abruptly, and a long interval has since passed: so that the thread I had then spun has slipped from me. I will try to recover it, and to pursue the task your lordship has obliged me to continue. Beside the pleasure of obeying your orders, it is likewise of some advantage to myself, to recollect my thoughts, and resume a study in which I was conversant formerly. For nothing can be more true than that saying of Solon reported by Plato, though censured by him, impertinently enough, in one of his wild books of laws.—"Assidue addi-"scens, ad senium venio." The truth is, the most knowing man, in the course of the longest life, will have always much to learn, and the wisest and best much to improve. This rule will hold in the knowledge and improvement to be acquired by the study of history: and therefore

even he who has gone to this school in his youth should not neglect it in his age. "I read in "Livy," says Montagne, "what another man "does not: and Plutarch read there what I do "not." Just so the same man may read at fifty what he did not read in the same book at five and twenty: at least I have found it so, by my own experience, on many occasions.

By comparing, in this study, the experience of other men and other ages with our own, we improve both: we analyse, as it were, philosophy. We reduce all the abstract speculations of ethicks, and all the general rules of human policy, to their first principles. With these advantages every man may, though few men do, advance daily toward those ideas, those increated essences a Platonist would say, which no human creature can reach in practice, but in the nearest approaches to which the perfection of our nature consists; because every approach of this kind renders a man better and wiser, for himself, for his family, for the little community of his own country, and for the great community of the world. Be not surprised, my lord, at the order in which I place these objects. Whatever order divines and moralists, who contemplate the duties belonging to these objects, may place them in, this is the order they hold in nature: and I have always thought that we might lead ourselves and others to private virtue, more effectually by a due observation of this order, than by any of those sublime refinements that pervert it.

Self-

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake;
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake.
The centre mov'd, a circle straight succeeds;
Another still, and still another spreads:
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race.

So sings our friend Pope, my lord, and so I believe. So I shall prove too, if I mistake not, in an epistle I am about to write to him, in order to complete a set that were writ some years ago.

A man of my age, who returns to the study of history, has no time to lose, because he has little to live: a man of your lordship's age has no time to lose, because he has much to do. For different reasons therefore the same rules will suit us. Neither of us must grope in the dark, neither of us must wander in the light. I have done the first formerly a good deal; "ne verba mihi da-"rentur; ne aliquid esse, in hac recondita an-"tiquitatis scientia, magni ac secreti boni judi-"caremus." If you take my word, you will throw none of your time away in the same manner: and I shall have the less regret for that which I have mispent, if I persuade you to hasten down from the broken traditions of antiquity to the more entire as well as more authentick histories of ages more modern. In the study of these we shall find many a complete series of events, preceded by a deduction of their immediate and remote causes, related in their full extent, and accompanied with such a detail of circumstances, and characters, as may transport the

the attentive reader back to the very time, make him a party to the councils, and an actor in the whole scene of affairs. Such draughts as these, either found in history or extracted by our own application from it, and such alone, are truly useful. Thus history becomes what she ought to be, and what she has been sometimes called, "magistra vitæ," the mistress, like philosophy, of human life. If she is not this, she is at best "nuntia vetustatis," the gazette of antiquity, or a dry register of useless anecdotes. Suetonius says that Tiberius used to inquire of the grammarians, "quæ mater Hecubæ? quod Achilles nomen inter virgines fuisset? quid Syrenes cantare sint solitæ?" Seneca mentions certain Greek authors, who examined very accurately whether Anacreon loved wine or women best, whether Sappho was a common whore, with other points of equal importance: and I make no doubt but that a man, better acquainted than I have the honour to be with the learned persons of our own country, might find some who have discovered several anecdotes concerning the giant Albion, concerning Samothes the son, or Brito the grandson of Japhet, and concerning Brutus who led a colony into our Island after the siege of Troy, as the others repeopled it after the deluge. But ten millions of such anecdotes as these, though they were true; and complete authentick volumes of Egyptian or Chaldean, of Greek or Latin, of Gallick or British, of French or Saxon records, would be of no value in my sense, because

because of no use toward our improvement in wisdom and virtue; if they contained nothing more than dynasties and genealogies, and a bare mention of remarkable events in the order of time, like journals, chronological tables, or dry and meagre annals.

I say the same of all those modern compositions in which we find rather the heads of history, than any thing that deserves to be called history. Their authors are either abridgers or compilers. The first do neither honour to themselves, nor good to mankind; for surely the abridger is in a form below the translator; and the book, at least the history, that wants to be abridged, does not deserve to be read. They have done anciently a great deal of hurt by substituting many a bad book in the place of a good one; and by giving occasion to men, who contented themselves with extracts and abridgments, to neglect, and through their neglect to lose, the invaluable originals: for which reason I curse Constantine Porphyrogenetes as heartily as I do Gregory. The second are of some use, as far as they contribute to preserve publick acts, and dates, and the memory of great events. But they who are thus employed have seldom the means of knowing those private passages on which all publick transactions depend, and as seldom the skill and the talents necessary to put what they do know well together: they cannot see the working of the mine, but their industry collects the matter that is thrown out. It is the business, or it should be so, of others to separate the pure ore from

from the dross, to stamp it into coin, and to enrich, not encumber mankind. When there are none sufficient to this task, there may be antiquaries, and there may be journalists or annalists, but there are no historians.

It is worth while to observe the progress, that the Romans and the Greeks made toward history. The Romans had journalists or annalists from the very beginning of their state. In the sixth century, or very near it at soonest, they began to have antiquaries, and some attempts were made towards writing of history. I call these first historical productions attempts only or essays: and they were no more, neither among the Romans, nor among the Greeks. "Græci "ipsi sic initio scriptitarunt ut noster Cato, ut "Pictor, ut Piso." It is Antony, not the triumvir, my lord, but his grandfather the famous orator, who says this in the second book of Tully De Oratore; he adds afterward, "Itaque qualis apud Græcos "Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Acusilaus, aliique per-"multi, talis noster Cato, et Pictor, et Piso." I know that Antony speaks here strictly of defect of style and want of oratory. They were, "tan-"tummodo narratores, non exornatores," as he expresses himself: but as they wanted style and skill to write in such a manner as might answer all the ends of history, so they wanted materials. Pherecydes writ something about Iphigenia, and the festivals of Bacchus. Hellanicus was a poetical historian, and Acusilaus graved genealogies on plates of brass. Pictor, who is

called

called by Livy "scriptorum antiquissimus," published, I think, some short annals of his own time. Neither he nor Piso could have sufficient materials for the history of Rome; nor Cato, I presume, even for the antiquities of Italy. The Romans, with the other people of that country, were then just rising out of barbarity, and growing acquainted with letters; for those that the Grecian colonies might bring into Sicily, and the southern parts of Italy, spread little, or lasted little, and made in the whole no figure. And whatever learning might have flourished among the ancient Etrurians, which was perhaps at most nothing better than augury, and divination, and superstitious rites, which were admired and cultivated in ignorant ages, even that was almost entirely worn out of memory. Pedants, who would impose all the traditions of the four first ages of Rome for authentick history, have insisted much on certain annals, of which mention is made in the very place I have just now quoted. "Ab initio rerum Romanarum," says the same interlocutor, "usque ad P. Mucium pontificem "maximum, res omnes singulorum annorum "mandabat literis pontifex maximus, efferebat-"que in album, et proponebat tabulam domi, "potestas ut esset populo cognoscendi; iidem-"que etiam nunc annales maximi nominantur." But, my lord, be pleased to take notice, that the very distinction I make is made here between a bare annalist and an historian: "erat historia "nihil aliud," in these early days, "nisi annali-

"um

"tum confectio." Take notice likewise, by the way, that Livy, whose particular application it had been to search into this matter, affirms positively, that the greatest part of all publick and private monuments, among which he specifies these very annals, had been destroyed in the sack of Rome by the Gauls: and Plutarch cites Clodius for the same assertion, in the life of Numa Pompilius. Take notice, in the last place, of that which is more immediately to our present purpose. These annals could contain nothing more than short minutes or memorandums hung up in a table at the pontiff's house, like the rules of the game in a billiard-room, and much such history as we have in the epitomies prefixed to the books of Livy or of any other historian, in lapidary inscriptions, or in some modern almanacks. Materials for history they were no doubt, but scanty and insufficient; such as those ages could produce when writing and reading were accomplishments so uncommon, that the prætor was directed by law, "clavum "pangere," to drive a nail into the door of a temple, that the number of years might be reckoned by the number of nails. Such in short as we have in monkish annalists, and other ancient chroniclers of nations now in being: but not such as can entitle the authors of them to be called historians, nor can enable others to write history in that fulness in which it must be written to become a lesson of ethicks and politicks. The truth is, nations, like men, have their infancy: and the few passages of that time, which they reatain,

retain, are not such as deserved most to be remembered; but such as, being most proportioned to that age, made the strongest impressions on their minds. In those nations that preserve their dominion long, and grow up to manhood, the elegant as well as the necessary arts and sciences are improved to some degree of perfection; and history, that was at first intended only to record the names, or perhaps the general characters of some famous men, and to transmit in gross the remarkable events of every age to posterity, is raised to answer another, and a nobler end.

II. Thus it happened among the Greeks, but much more among the Romans, notwithstanding the prejudices in favour of the former, even among the latter. I have sometimes thought that Virgil might have justly ascribed to his countrymen the praise of writing history better, as well as that of affording the noblest subjects for it, in those famous verses *, where the different excellencies of the two nations are so finely touched: but he would have weakened perhaps by lengthening, and have flattened the climax. Open Herodotus, you are entertained by an agreeable story-teller, who meant to entertain, and nothing more. Read

* Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra,
Credo equidem: vivos ducent de marmore vultus;
Orabunt causas melius: cœlique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent:
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:
Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

Thucydides

Thucydides or Xenophon, you are taught indeed as well as entertained: and the statesman or the general, the philosopher or the orator, speaks to you in every page. They wrote on subjects on which they were well informed, and they treated them fully: they maintained the dignity of history, and thought it beneath them to vamp up old traditions, like the writers of their age and country, and to be the trumpeters of a lying antiquity. The Cyropædia of Xenophon may be objected perhaps; but if he gave it for a romance, not a history, as he might for aught we can tell, it is out of the case: and if he gave it for a history, not a romance, I should prefer his authority to that of Herodotus, or any other of his countrymen. But however this might be, and whatever merit we may justly ascribe to these two writers, who were almost single in their kind, and who treated but small portions of history; certain it is in general, that the levity as well as loquacity of the Greeks made them incapable of keeping up to the true standard of history: and even Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus must bow to the great Roman authors. Many principal men of that commonwealth wrote memorials of their own actions and their own times: Sylla, Cæsar, Labienus, Pollio, Augustus, and others. What writers of memorials, what compilers of the materia historica were these! What genius was necessary to finish up the pictures, that such masters had ſketched! Rome afforded men that were equal

to

to the task. Let the remains, the precious remains, of Sallust, of Livy, and of Tacitus, witness this truth. When Tacitus wrote, even the appearances of virtue had been long proscribed, and taste was grown corrupt as well as manners. Yet history preserved her integrity and her lustre. She preserved them in the writings of some whom Tacitus mentions, in none perhaps more than his own; every line of which outweighs whole pages of such a rhetor as Famianus Strada. I single him out among the moderns, because he had the foolish presumption to censure Tacitus, and to write history himself: and your lordship will forgive this short excursion in honour of a favourite author.

What a school of private and publick virtue had been opened to us at the resurrection of learning, if the latter historians of the Roman commonwealth, and the first of the succeeding monarchy, had come down to us entire? The few that are come down, though broken and imperfect, compose the best body of history that we have, nay the only body of ancient history that deserves to be an object of study. It fails us indeed most at that remarkable and fatal period, where our reasonable curiosity is raised the highest. Livy employed five and forty books to bring his history down to the end of the sixth century, and the breaking out of the third Punick war: but he employed ninety-five to bring it down from thence to the death of Drusus; that is, through the course of one hundred and twenty or thirty years. Appian, Dion Cassius, and others, nay

nay even Plutarch included, make us but poor amends for what is lost of Livy. Among all the adventitious helps by which we endeavour to supply this loss in some degree, the best are those which we find scattered up and down in the works of Tully. His Orations, particularly, and his Letters, contain many curious anecdotes and instructive reflections, concerning the intrigues and machinations that were carried on against liberty, from Catiline's conspiracy to Cæsar's. The state of the government, the constitution and temper of the several parties, and the characters of the principal persons who figured at that time on the publick stage, are to be seen there in a stronger and truer light than they would have appeared perhaps if he had writ purposely on this subject, and even in those memorials which he somewhere promises Atticus to write. "Excudam aliquod Heraclidium opus, "quod lateat in thesauris tuis." He would hardly have unmasked in such a work, as freely as in familiar occasional letters, Pompey, Cato, Brutus, nay himself; the four men of Rome, on whose praises he dwelt with the greatest complacency. The age in which Livy flourished abounded with such materials as these: they were fresh, they were authentick; it was easy to procure them, it was safe to employ them. How he did employ them in executing the second part of his design, we may judge by his execution of the first: and, I own to your lordship, I should be glad to exchange, if it were possible, what we have of this history for what we have not. Would

you

you not be glad, my lord, to see, in one stupendous draught, the whole progress of that government from liberty to servitude? the whole series of causes and effects, apparent and real, publick and private? those which all men saw, and all good men lamented and opposed at the time; and those which were so disguised to the prejudices, to the partialities of a divided people, and even to the corruption of mankind, that many did not, and that many could pretend they did not, discern them, till it was too late to resist them? I am sorry to say it, this part of the Roman story would be not only more curious and more authentick than the former, but of more immediate and more important application to the present state of Britain. But it is lost: the loss is irreparable, and your lordship will not blame me for deploring it.

III. They who set up for scepticism may not regret the loss of such a history: but this I will be bold to assert to them, that a history must be writ on this plan, and must aim at least at these perfections, or it will answer sufficiently none of the intentions of history. That it will not answer sufficiently the intention I have insisted upon in these letters, that of instructing posterity by the example of former ages, is manifest: and I think it is as manifest, that a history cannot be said even to relate faithfully, and inform us truly, that does not relate fully, and inform us of all that is necessary to make a true judgment concerning the matters contained in it. Naked facts, without the causes that pro-

duced them, and the circumstances that accompanied them, are not sufficient to characterise actions or counsels. The nice degrees of wisdom and of folly, of virtue and of vice, will not only be undiscoverable in them; but we must be very often unable to determine under which of these characters they fall in general. The scepticks I am speaking of are therefore guilty of this absurdity: the nearer a history comes to the true idea of history, the better it informs and the more it instructs us, the more worthy to be rejected it appears to them. I have said and allowed enough to content any reasonable man about the uncertainty of history. I have owned that the best are defective, and I will add in this place an observation, which did not, I think, occur to me before. Conjecture is not always distinguished perhaps as it ought to be; so that an ingenious writer may sometimes do very innocently, what a malicious writer does very criminally as often as he dares, and as his malice requires it: he may account for events, after they have happened, by a system of causes and conduct that did not really produce them, though it might possibly or even probably have produced them. But this observation, like several others, becomes a reason for examining and comparing authorities, and for preferring some, not for rejecting all. Davila, a noble historian surely, and one whom I should not scruple to confess equal in many respects to Livy, as I should not scruple to prefer his countryman Guicciardin

to

to Thucydides in every respect; Davila, my lord, was accused, from the first publication of his history, or at least was suspected, of too much refinement and subtlety, in developing the secret motives of actions, in laying the causes of events too deep, and deducing them often through a series of progression too complicated, and too artistly wrought. But yet the suspicious person, who should reject this historian upon such general inducements as these, would have no grace to oppose his suspicions to the authority of the first duke of Epernon, who had been an actor, and a principal actor too, in many of the scenes that Davila recites. Girard, secretary to this duke, and no contemptible biographer, relates, that this history came down to the place where the old man resided in Gascony, a little before his death; that he read it to him, that the duke confirmed the truth of the narrations in it, and seemed only surprised by what means the author could be so well informed of the most secret councils and measures of those times.

IV. I have said enough on this head, and your lordship may be induced perhaps, by what I have said, to think with me, that such histories as these, whether ancient or modern, deserve alone to be studied. Let us leave the credulous learned to write history without materials, or to study those who do so; to wrangle about ancient traditions, and to ring different changes on the same set of bells. Let us leave the scepticks, in modern as well as ancient history, to triumph

in the notable discovery of the ides of one month mistaken for the calends of another, or in the various dates and contradictory circumstances which they find in weekly gazettes and monthly mercuries. While they are thus employed, your lordship and I will proceed, if you please, to consider more closely, than we have yet done, the rule mentioned above; that, I mean, of using discernment and choice in the study of the most authentick history, that of not wandering in the light, which is as necessary as that of not groping in the dark.

Man is the subject of every history; and to know him well, we must see him and consider him, as history alone can present him to us, in every age, in every country, in every state, in life and in death. History therefore of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of ancient and modern nations, in short all history, that descends to a sufficient detail of human actions and characters, is useful to bring us acquainted with our species, nay, with ourselves. To teach and to inculcate the general principles of virtue, and the general rules of wisdom and good policy, which result from such details of actions and characters, comes for the most part, and always should come, expressly and directly into the design of those who are capable of giving such details; and therefore while they narrate as historians, they hint often as philosophers; they put into our hands, as it were, on every proper occasion, the end of a clew, that serves to remind us of searching, and

to guide us in the search of that truth, which the example before us either establishes or illustrates. If a writer neglects this part, we are able however to supply his neglect by our own attention and industry: and when he gives us a good history of Peruvians or Mexicans, of Chinese or Tartars, of Muscovites or Negroes, we may blame him, but we must blame ourselves much more, if we do not make it a good lesson of philosophy. This being the general use of history, it is not to be neglected. Every one may make it, who is able to read and to reflect on what he reads: and every one who makes it will find in his degree the benefit, that arises from an early acquaintance contracted in this manner with mankind. We are not only passengers or sojourners in this world, but we are absolute strangers at the first steps we make in it. Our guides are often ignorant, often unfaithful. By this map of the country, which history spreads before us, we may learn, if we please, to guide ourselves. In our journey through it, we are beset on every side. We are besieged sometimes even in our strongest holds. Terrours and temptations, conducted by the passions of other men, assault us: and our own passions, that correspond with these, betray us. History is a collection of the journals of those who have travelled through the same country, and been exposed to the same accidents: and their good and their ill success are equally instructive. In this pursuit of knowledge an immense field is opened to us: general histories, sacred

and profane; the histories of particular countries, particular events, particular orders, particular men; memorials, anecdotes, travels. But we must not ramble in this field without discernment or choice, nor even with these must we ramble too long.

As to the choice of authors, who have writ on all these various subjects, so much has been said by learned men concerning all those that deserve attention, and their several characters are so well established, that it would be a sort of pedantick affectation to lead your lordship through so voluminous, and at the same time so easy, a detail. I pass it over therefore in order to observe, that as soon as we have taken this general view of mankind, and of the course of human affairs in different ages and different parts of the world, we ought to apply, and, the shortness of human life considered, to confine ourselves almost entirely, in our study of history, to such histories as have an immediate relation to our professions, or to our rank and situation in the society to which we belong. Let me instance in the profession of divinity, as the noblest and the most important.

(1.) I have said so much concerning the share which divines of all religions have taken in the corruption of history, that I should have anathemas pronounced against me, no doubt, in the east and the west, by the dairo, the mufti, and the pope, if these letters were submitted to ecclesiastical censure; for surely, my lord, the clergy have a better title, than the sons of Apollo, to be

called "genus irritabile vatum." What would it be, if I went about to show, how many of the christian clergy abuse, by misrepresentation and false quotation, the history they can no longer corrupt? And yet this task would not be, even to me, a hard one. But as I mean to speak in this place of christian divines alone, so I mean to speak of such of them particularly as may be called divines without any sneer; of such of them, for some such I think there are, as believe themselves, and would have mankind believe; not for temporal but spiritual interest, not for the sake of the clergy, but for the sake of mankind. Now it has been long matter of astonishment to me, how such persons as these could take so much silly pains to establish mystery on metaphysicks, revelation on philosophy, and matters of fact on abstract reasoning? A religion founded on the authority of a divine mission, confirmed by prophecies and miracles, appeals to facts: and the facts must be proved as all other facts that pass for authentick are proved; for faith, so reasonable after this proof, is absurd before it. If they are thus proved, the religion will prevail without the assistance of so much profound reasoning: if they are not thus proved, the authority of it will sink in the world even with this assistance. The divines object in their disputes with atheists, and they object very justly, that these men require improper proofs; proofs that are not suited to the nature of the subject, and then cavil that such proofs are not furnished.

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But what then do they mean, to fall into the same absurdity themselves in their disputes with theists, and to din improper proofs in ears that are open to proper proofs? The matter is of great moment, my lord, and I make no excuse for the zeal which obliges me to dwell a little on it. A serious and honest application to the study of ecclesiastical history, and every part of profane history and chronology relative to it, is incumbent on such reverend persons as are here spoken of, on a double account: because history alone can furnish the proper proofs, that the religion they teach is of God; and because the unfair manner, in which these proofs have been and are daily furnished, creates prejudices, and gives advantages against christianity, that require to be removed. No scholar will dare to deny, that false history, as well as sham miracles, has been employed to propagate christianity formerly; and whoever examines the writers of our own age will find the same abuse of history continued. Many and many instances of this abuse might be produced. It is grown into custom, writers copy one another, and the mistake that was committed, or the falshood that was invented by one, is adopted by hundreds.

Abbaide says in his famous book, that the Gospel of Saint Matthew is cited by Clemens bishop of Rome, a disciple of the apostles; that Barnabas cites it in his epistle: that Ignatius and Polycarp receive it; and that the same fathers, that give testimony for Matthew, give

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it likewise for Mark. Nay your lordship will find, I believe, that the present bishop of London, in his third pastoral letter, speaks to the same effect. I will not trouble you nor myself with any more instances of the same kind. Let this, which occurred to me as I was writing, suffice. It may well suffice; for I presume the fact advanced by the minister and the bishop is a mistake. If the fathers of the first century do mention some passages that are agreeable to what we read in our evangelists, will it follow that these fathers had the same Gospels before them? To say so is a manifest abuse of history; and quite inexcusable in writers that knew, or should have known, that these fathers made use of other Gospels, wherein such passages might be contained, or they might be preserved in unwritten tradition. Beside which, I could almost venture to affirm, that these fathers of the first century do not expressly name the Gospels we have of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. To the two reasons that have been given, why those who make divinity their profession should study history, particularly ecclesiastical history, with an honest and serious application; in order to support christianity against the attacks of unbelievers, and to remove the doubts and prejudices that the unfair proceedings of men of their own order have raised in minds candid but not implicit, willing to be informed but curious to examine; to these, I say, we may add another consideration that seems to me of no small importance. Writers of the Roman

man religion have attempted to show, that the text of the holy writ is on many accounts insufficient to be the sole criterion of orthodoxy: I apprehend too that they have shown it. Sure I am that experience, from the first promulgation of christianity to this hour, shows abundantly with how much ease and success the most opposite, the most extravagant, nay the most impious opinions, and the most contradictory faiths, may be founded on the same text; and plausibly defended by the same authority. Writers of the reformed religion have erected their batteries against tradition; and the only difficulty they had to encounter in this enterprise lay in levelling and pointing their cannon so as to avoid demolishing, in one common ruin, the traditions they retain, and those they reject. Each side has been employed to weaken the cause and explode the system of his adversary: and, while they have been so employed, they have jointly laid their axes to the root of christianity: for thus men will be apt to reason upon what they have advanced. "If the text has not that authenticity, "clearness, and precision, which are necessary "to establish it as a divine and a certain rule of "faith and practice; and if the tradition of the "church, from the first ages of it till the days "of Luther and Calvin, has been corrupted itself, "and has served to corrupt the faith and practice of "christians; there remains at this time no standard "at all of christianity. By consequence either this "religion was not originally of divine institution, or

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" else God has not provided effectually for preserv-
" ing the genuine purity of it, and the gates of Hell
" have actually prevailed, in contradiction to
" his promise, against the church." The best effect of this reasoning, that can be hoped for, is, that men should fall into theism, and subscribe to the first proposition: he must be worse than an atheist who can affirm the last. The dilemma is terrible, my lord. Party zeal and private interest have formed it: the common interest of christianity is deeply concerned to solve it. Now, I presume, it can never be solved without a more accurate examination, not only of the christian but of the Jewish system, than learned men have been hitherto impartial enough and sagacious enough to take, or honest enough to communicate. While the authenticity and sense of the text of the Bible remain as disputable, and while the tradition of the church remains as problematical, to say no worse, as the immense labours of the christian divines in several communions have made them appear to be; christianity may lean on the civil and ecclesiastical power, and be supported by the forcible influence of education; but the proper force of religion, that force which subdues the mind, and awes the conscience by conviction, will be wanting.

I had reason therefore to produce divinity, as one instance of those professions that require a particular application to the study of some particular parts of history; and since I have said so much on the subject in my zeal for christianity,

ianity, I will add this further. The resurrection of letters was a fatal period: the christian system has been attacked, and wounded too, very severely since that time. The defence has been better made indeed by modern divines, than it had been by ancient fathers and apologists. The moderns have invented new methods of defence, and have abandoned some posts that were not tenable: but still there are others, in defending which they lie under great disadvantages. Such are various facts, piously believed in former times, but on which the truth of christianity has been rested very imprudently in more enlightened ages; because the falsity of some, and the gross improbability of others are so evident, that, instead of answering the purpose for which they were invented, they have rendered the whole tenour of ecclesiastical history and tradition precarious, ever since a strict but just application of the rules of criticism has been made to them. I touch these things lightly; but if your lordship reflects upon them, you will find reason perhaps to think as I do, that it is high time the clergy in all christian communions should join their forces, and establish those historical facts, which are the foundations of the whole system, on clear and unquestionable historical authority, such as they require in all cases of moment from others; reject candidly what cannot be thus established; and pursue their inquiries in the same spirit of truth through all the ages of the church; without any regard to historians, fathers,

or councils, more than they are strictly entitled to on the face of what they have transmitted to us, on their own consistency, and on the concurrence of other authority. Our pastors would be thus, I presume, much better employed than they generally are. Those of the clergy who make religion merely a trade, who regard nothing more than the subsistence it affords them, or in higher life the wealth and power they enjoy by the means of it, may say to themselves, that it will last their time, or that policy and reason of state will preserve the form of a church when the spirit of religion is extinct. But those whom I mentioned above, those who act for spiritual not temporal ends, and are desirous that men should believe and practise the doctrines of christianity, as well as go to church and pay tithes, will feel and own the weight of such considerations as these; and agree, that however the people have been, and may be still amused, yet christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of letters; and that it cannot be supported as it was supported before that æra, nor by any other way than that which I propose, and which a due application to the study of history, chronology, and criticism, would enable our divines to pursue, no doubt, with success.

I might instance, in other professions, the obligations men lie under of applying themselves to certain parts of history, and I can hardly forbear doing it in that of the law; in it's nature the noblest and most beneficial to mankind, in

in it's abuse and debasement the most sordid and the most pernicious. A lawyer now is nothing more, I speak of ninety-nine in a hundred at least, to use some of Tully's words, "nisi legulejus quidam cautus, et acutus præco "actionum, cantor formularum, auceps syllaba-"rum." But there have been lawyers, that were orators, philosophers, historians: there have been Bacons and Clarendons, my lord. There will be none such any more, till in some better age true ambition or the love of fame prevails over avarice; and till men find leisure and encouragement to prepare themselves for the exercise of this profession, by climbing up to the "vantage ground," so my lord Bacon calls it, of science; instead of grovelling all their lives below, in a mean but gainful application to all the little arts of chicane. Till this happen, the profession of the law will scarce deserve to be ranked among the learned professions: and whenever it happens, one of the vantage grounds, to which men must climb, is metaphysical, and the other, historical knowledge. They must pry into the secret recesses of the human heart, and become well acquainted with the whole moral world, that they may discover the abstract reason of all laws: and they must trace the laws of particular states, especially of their own, from the first rough sketches to the more perfect draughts; from the first causes or occasions that produced them, through all the effects, good and bad, that they produced. But I am running insensibly into

into a subject, which would detain me too long from one that relates more immediately to your lordship, and with which I intend to conclude this long letter.

(2) I pass from the consideration of those professions to which particular parts or kinds of history seem to belong: and I come to speak of the study of history, as a necessary mean to prepare men for the discharge of that duty which they owe to their country, and which is common to all the members of every society that is constituted according to the rules of right reason, and with a due regard to the common good. I have met, in St .Real's works, or some other French book, with a ridicule cast on private men who make history a political study; or who apply themselves in any manner to affairs of state. But the reflection is too general. In governments so arbitrary by their constitution, that the will of the prince is not only the supreme but the sole law, it is so far from being a duty, that it may be dangerous, and must be impertinent in men, who are not called by the prince to the administration of publick affairs, to concern themselves about it, or to fit themselves for it. The sole vocation there is the favour of the court; and whatever designation God makes by the talents he bestows, though it may serve, which it seldom ever does, to direct the choice of the prince, yet I presume that it cannot become a reason to particular men, or create a duty on them, to devote themselves to the publick

service. Look on the Turkish government. See a fellow taken, from rowing in a common paſſage-boat, by the caprice of the prince: see him invested next day with all the power the soldans took under the caliphs, or the mayors of the palace under the succeſſors of Clovis: see a whole empire governed by the ignorance, inexperience, and arbitrary will of this tyrant, and a few other subordinate tyrants, as ignorant and unexperienced as himself. In France indeed, though an abſolute government, things go a little better. Arts and sciences are encouraged, and here and there an example may be found of a man who has risen by some extraordinary talents, amidst innumerable examples of men who have arrived at the greatest honours and highest posts by no other merit than that of assiduous fawning, attendance, or of skill in some despicable puerile amusement; in training wasps, for instance, to take regular flights like hawks, and stoop at flies. The nobility of France, like the children of tribute among the ancient Saracens and modern Turks, are set apart for wars. They are bred to make love, to hunt, and to fight: and, if any of them should acquire knowledge superiour to this, they would acquire that which might be prejudicial to themselves, but could not become beneficial to their country. The affairs of state are trusted to other hands. Some have risen to them by drudging long in business: some have been made ministers almost in the cradle: and the whole power of the government has been abandoned

abandoned to others in the dotage of life. There is a monarchy, an absolute monarchy too, I mean that of China, wherein the administration of the government is carried on, under the direction of the prince, ever since the dominion of the Tartars has been established, by several classes of mandarins, and according to the deliberation and advice of several orders of councils: the admission to which classes and orders depends on the abilities of the candidates, as their rise on them depends on the behaviour they hold, and the improvements they make afterward. Under such a government, it is neither impertinent nor ridiculous, in any of the subjects who are invited by their circumstances, or pushed to it by their talents, to make the history of their own and of other countries a political study, and to fit themselves by this and all other ways for the service of the publick. It is not dangerous neither; or an honour, that outweighs the danger, attends it: since private men have a right by the ancient constitution of this government, as well as councils of state, to represent to the prince the abuses of his administration. But still men have not there the same occasion to concern themselves in the affairs of the state, as the nature of a free government gives to the members of it. In our own country, for in our own the forms of a free government at least are hitherto preserved, men are not only designed for the publick service by the circumstances of their situation, and their talents, all which may happen in others: but they are

designed to it by their birth in many cases, and in all cases they may dedicate themselves to this service, and take, in different degrees, some share in it, whether they are called to it by the prince or no. In absolute governments, all publick service is to the prince, and he nominates all those that serve the publick. In free governments, there is a distinct and a principal service due to the state. Even the king of such a limited monarchy as ours is but the first servant of the people. Among his subjects, some are appointed by the constitution, and others are elected by the people, to carry on the exercise of the legislative power jointly with him, and to control the executive power independently on him. Thus your lordſhip is born a member of that order of men, in whom a third part of the supreme power of the government resides: and your right to the exercise of the power belonging to this order not being yet opened, you are chosen into another body of men, who have different power and a different constitution, but who possess another third part of the supreme legislative authority, for as long a time as the commission or trust delegated to them by the people lasts. Freemen, who are neither born to the first, nor elected to the last, have a right however to complain, to represent, to petition, and, I add, even to do more in cases of the utmost extremity. For sure there cannot be a greater absurdity, than to affirm, that the people have a remedy in resistance, when their prince attempts to enslave them; but that they have

have none, when their representatives sell themselves and them.

The sum of what I have been saying is, that, in free governments, the publick service is not confined to those whom the prince appoints to different posts in the administration under him; that there the care of the state is the care of multitudes; that many are called to it in a particular manner by their rank, and by other circumstances of their situation; and that even those whom the prince appoints are not only answerable to him, but, like him, and before him, to the nation, for their behaviour in their several posts. It can never be impertinent nor ridiculous therefore in such a country, whatever it might be in the abbot of St. Real's, which was Savoy I think; or in Peru, under the Incas, where, Garcilasso de la Vega says it was lawful for none but the nobility to study—for men of all degrees to instruct themselves in those affairs wherein they may be actors, or judges of those that act, or controllers of those that judge. On the contrary, it is incumbent on every man to instruct himself, as well as the means and opportunities he has permit, concerning the nature and interests of the government, and those rights and duties that belong to him, or to his superiours, or to his inferiours. This in general; but in particular it is certain that the obligations under which we lie to serve our country increase, in proportion to the ranks we hold, and the other circumstances of birth, fortune, and situ-

ation that call us to this service; and, above all, to the talents which God has given us to perform it.

It is in this view that I shall address to your lordship whatever I have further to say on the study of history.

LETTER VI.

From what period modern history is peculiarly useful to the service of our country, viz.

From the end of the fifteenth century to the present.

The division of this into three particular periods:

In order to a sketch of the history and state of Europe from that time.

SINCE then you are, my lord, by your birth, by the nature of our government, and by the talents God has given you, attached for life to the service of your country; since genius alone cannot enable you to go through this service with honour to yourself and advantage to your country, whether you support or whether you oppose the administrations that arise; since a great stock of knowledge, acquired betimes and continually improved, is necessary to this end; and since one part of this stock must be collected from the study of history, as the other part is to be gained by observation and experience; I come now to speak to your lordship of such history as has an immediate relation to the great duty and business of your life, and of the method to be observed in this study. The notes I have by me, which were of some little use thus far, serve me no farther, and I have no books to consult. No matter; I shall be able to explain my thoughts without their assistance, and less liable to be tedious. I hope to be as full and as exact on memory alone, as the

manner in which I shall treat the subject requires me to be.

I say then, that however closely affairs are linked together in the progression of governments, and how much soever events that follow are dependent on those that precede, the whole connexion diminishes to sight as the chain lengthens; till at last it seems to be broken, and the links that are continued from that point bear no proportion nor any similitude to the former. I would not be understood to speak only of those great changes, that are wrought by a concurrence of extraordinary events: for instance the expulsion of one nation, the destruction of one government, and the establishment of another: but even of those that are wrought in the same governments and among the same people, slowly and almost imperceptibly, by the necessary effects of time, and flux condition of human affairs. When such changes as these happen in several states about the same time, and consequently affect other states by their vicinity, and by many different relations which they frequently bear to one another; then is one of those periods formed, at which the chain spoken of is so broken as to have little or no real or visible connexion with that which we see continue. A new situation, different from the former, begets new interests in the same proportion of difference; not in this or that particular state alone, but in all those that are concerned by vicinity or other relations, as I said just now, in one general system

system of policy. New interests beget new maxims of government, and new methods of conduct. These, in their turns, beget new manners, new habits, new customs. The longer this new constitution of affairs continues, the more will this difference increase: and although some analogy may remain long between what preceded and what succeeds such a period, yet will this analogy soon become an object of mere curiosity, not of profitable inquiry. Such a period therefore is, in the true sense of the words, an epocha or an æra, a point of time at which you stop, or from which you reckon forward. I say forward; because we are not to study in the present case, as chronologers compute, backward. Should we persist to carry our researches much higher, and to push them even to some other period of the same kind, we should misemploy our time; the causes then laid having spent themselves, the series of effects derived from them being over, and our concern in both consequently at an end. But a new system of causes and effects, that subsists in our time, and whereof our conduct is to be a part, arising at the last period, and all that passes in our time being dependent on what has passed since that period, or being immediately relative to it, we are extremely concerned to be well informed about all those passages. To be entirely ignorant about the ages that precede this æra would be shameful. Nay some indulgence may be had to a temperate curiosity in the review of them. But to be learned about them is a ridiculous affectation in

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any man who means to be useful to the present age. Down to this æra let us read history: from this æra, and down to our own time, let us study it.

The end of the fifteenth century seems to be just such a period as I have been describing, for those who live in the eighteenth, and who inhabit the western parts of Europe. A little before, or a little after this point of time, all those events happened, and all those revolutions began, that have produced so vast a change in the manners, customs, and interests of particular nations, and in the whole policy, ecclesiastical and civil, of these parts of the world. I must descend here into some detail, not of histories, collections, or memorials; for all these are well enough known: and though the contents are in the heads of few, the books are in the hands of many. But instead of showing your lordship where to look, I shall contribute more to your entertainment and instruction, by marking out, as well as my memory will serve me to do it, what you are to look for, and by furnishing a kind of clew to your studies. I shall give, according to custom, the first place to religion.

A view of the ecclesiastical government of Europe from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Observe then, my lord, that the demolition of the papal throne was not attempted with success till the beginning of the sixteenth century. If you

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are curious to cast your eyes back, you will find Berenger in the eleventh, who was soon silenced; Arnoldus in the same, who was soon hanged; Valdo in the twelfth, and our Wickliff in the fourteenth, as well as others perhaps whom I do not recollect. Sometimes the doctrines of the church were alone attacked; and sometimes the doctrine, the discipline, and the usurpations of the pope. But little fires, kindled in corners of a dark world, were soon stifled by that great abettor of christian unity, the hangman. When they spread and blazed out, as in the case of the Albigeois and of the Hussites, armies were raised to extinguish them by torrents of blood; and such saints as Dominick, with the crucifix in their hands, instigated the troops to the utmost barbarity. Your lordship will find that the church of Rome was maintained by such charitable and salutary means, among others, till the period spoken of: and you will be curious, I am sure, to inquire how this period came to be more fatal to her than any former conjuncture. A multitude of circumstances, which you will easily trace in the histories of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to go no further back, concurred to bring about this great event: and a multitude of others, as easy to be traced, concurred to hinder the demolition from becoming total, and to prop the tottering fabrick. Among these circumstances, there is one less complicated and more obvious than others, which was of principal and universal influence. The art of printing had been invented about forty or fifty years before the period we fix: from that time, the

the resurrection of letters hastened on apace; and at this period they had made great progress, and were cultivated with great application. Mahomet the second drove them out of the east into the west; and the popes proved worse politicians than the mufties in this respect. Nicholas the fifth encouraged learning and learned men. Sixtus the fourth was, if I mistake not, a great collector of books at least: and Leo the tenth was the patron of every art and science. The magicians themselves broke the charm by which they had bound mankind for so many ages: and the adventure of that knight-errant, who, thinking himself happy in the arms of a celestial nymph, found that he was the miserable slave of an infernal hag, was in some sort renewed. As soon as the means of acquiring and spreading information grew common, it is no wonder that a system was unravelled, which could not have been woven with success in any ages, but those of gross ignorance, and credulous superstition. I might point out to your lordship many other immediate causes, some general like this that I have mentioned, and some particular. The great schism, for instance, that ended in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and in the council of Constance, had occasioned prodigious scandal. Two or three vicars of Christ, two or three infallible heads of the church roaming about the world at a time, furnished matter of ridicule as well as scandal: and while they appealed, for so they did in effect, to the laity, and reproached and excommunicated one another, they taught the world what to think of the institution,

tion, as well as exercise of the papal authority. The same lesson was taught by the council of Pisa, that preceded, and by that of Basle, that followed the council of Constance. The horrid crimes of Alexander the sixth, the saucy ambition of Julius the second, the immense profusion and scandalous exactions of Leo the tenth; all these events and characters, following in a continued series from the beginning of one century, prepared the way for the revolution that happened in the beginning of the next. The state of Germany, the state of England, and that of the North, were particular causes, in these several countries, of this revolution. Such were many remarkable events that happened about the same time, and a little before it, in these and in other nations; and such were likewise the characters of many of the princes of that age, some of whom favoured the reformation, like the elector of Saxony, on a principle of conscience; and most of whom favoured it, just as others opposed it, on a principle of interest. This your lordship will discover manifestly to have been the case; and the sole difference you will find between Henry the eighth and Francis the first, one of whom separated from the pope, as the other adhered to him, is this: Henry the eighth divided, with the secular clergy and his people, the spoil of the pope, and his satellites, the monks; Francis the first divided, with the pope, the spoil of his clergy, secular and regular, and of his people. With the same impartial eye that your lordship surveys the abuses of religion, and

and the corruptions of the church as well as court of Rome, which brought on the reformation at this period; you will observe the characters and conduct of those who began, who propagated, and who favoured the reformation: and from your observation of these, as well as of the unsystematical manner in which it was carried on at the same time in various places, and of the want of concert, nay even of charity, among the reformers, you will learn what to think of the several religions that unite in their opposition to the Roman, and yet hate one another most heartily; what to think of the several sects that have sprouted, like suckers, from the same great roots; and what the true principles are of protestant ecclesiastical policy. This policy had no being till Luther made his establishment in Germany; till Zwinglius began another in Swisserland, which Calvin carried on, and, like Americus Vesputius who followed Christopher Columbus, robbed the first adventurer of his honour; and till the reformation in our country was perfected under Edward the sixth and Elizabeth. Even popish ecclesiastical policy is no longer the same since that æra. His holiness is no longer at the head of the whole western church: and to keep the part that adheres to him, he is obliged to loosen their chains, and to lighten his yoke. The spirit and pretensions of his court are the same, but not the power. He governs by expedient and management more, and by authority less. His decrees and his briefs are in danger of being refused,

refused, explained away, or evaded, unless he negotiates their acceptance before he gives them, governs in concert with his flock, and feeds his sheep according to their humour and interest. In short, his excommunications, that made the greatest emperors tremble, are despised by the lowest members of his own communion; and the remaining attachment to him has been, from this æra, rather a political expedient to preserve an appearance of unity, than a principle of conscience; whatever some bigotted princes may have thought, whatever ambitious prelates and hireling scriblers may have taught, and whatever a people, worked up to enthusiasm by fanatical preachers, may have acted. Proofs of this would be easy to draw, not only from the conduct of such princes as Ferdinand the first and Maximilian the second, who could scarce be esteemed papists though they continued in the pope's communion; but even from that of princes who persecuted their protestant subjects with great violence. Enough has been said, I think, to show your lordship how little need there is of going up higher than the beginning of the sixteenth century in the study of history, to acquire all the knowledge necessary at this time in ecclesiastical policy, or in civil policy as far as it is relative to this. Historical monuments of this sort are in every man's hand, the facts are sufficiently verified, and the entire scenes lie open to our observation: even that scene of solemn refined banter exhibited in the council of Trent imposes on no man who reads

Paolo,

Paolo, as well as Pallavicini, and the letters of Vargas.

A view of the civil government of Europe in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

I. In FRANCE.

A very little higher need we go, to observe those great changes in the civil constitutions of the principal nations of Europe, in the partition of power among them, and by consequence in the whole system of European policy, which have operated so strongly for more than two centuries, and which operate still. I will not affront the memory of our Henry the seventh so much as to compare him to Lewis the eleventh: and yet I perceive some resemblance between them; which would perhaps appear greater, if Philip of Commines had wrote the history of Henry as well as that of Lewis; or if my lord Bacon had wrote that of Lewis as well as that of Henry. This prince came to the crown of England a little before the close of the fifteenth century: and Lewis began his reign in France about twenty years sooner. These reigns make remarkable periods in the histories of both nations. To reduce the power, privileges, and possessions of the nobility, and to increase the wealth and authority of the crown, was the principal object of both. In this their success was so great, that the constitutions of the two governments have had, since that time, more resemblance in name and in form, than in reality,

reality, to the constitutions that prevailed before. Lewis the eleventh was the first, say the French, " qui mit les rois hors de page." The independency of the nobility had rendered the state of his predecessors very dependent, and their power precarious. They were the sovereigns of great vassals; but these vassals were so powerful, that one of them was sometimes able, and two or three of them always, to give law to the sovereign. Before Lewis came to the crown, the English had been driven out of their possessions in France, by the poor character of Henry the sixth, the domestick troubles of his reign, and the defection of the house of Burgundy from his alliance, much more than by the ability of Charles the seventh, who seems to have been neither a greater hero nor a greater politician than Henry the sixth; and even than by the vigour and union of the French nobility in his service. After Lewis came to the crown, Edward the fourth made a show of carrying the war again into France; but he soon returned home; and your lordship will not be at a loss to find much better reasons for his doing so, in the situation of his affairs and the characters of his allies, than those which Philip of Commines draws from the artifice of Lewis, from his good cheer, and his pensions. Now from this time our pretensions on France were in effect given up: and Charles the bold, the last prince of the house of Burgundy, being killed, Lewis had no vassal able to molest him. He reunited the duchy of Burgundy and Artois to his crown, he acquired Provence by gift, and

his son Britany by marriage; and thus France grew, in the course of a few years, into that great and compact body, which we behold at this time. The history of France, before this period, is like that of Germany, a complicated history of several states and several interests; sometimes concurring like members of the same monarchy, and sometimes warring on one another. Since this period, the history of France is the history of one state under a more uniform and orderly government; the history of a monarchy wherein the prince is possessor of some, as well as lord of all the great fieffes: and, the authority of many tyrants centring in one, though the people are not become more free, yet the whole system of domestick policy is entirely changed. Peace at home is better secured, and the nation grown fitter to carry war abroad. The governors of great provinces and of strong fortresses have opposed their king, and taken arms against his authority and commission since that time: but yet there is no more resemblance between the authority and pretensions of these governors, or the nature and occasions of these disputes, and the authority and pretensions of the vassals of the crown in former days, or the nature and occasions of their disputes with the prince and with one another, than there is between the ancient and the present peers of France. In a word, the constitution is so altered, that any knowledge we can acquire about it, in the history that precedes this period, will serve to little purpose in our study of the history that follows it, and to less purpose still in assisting

us to judge of what passes in the present age. The kings of France since that time, more masters at home, have been able to exert themselves more abroad: and they began to do so immediately; for Charles the eighth, son and successor of Lewis the eleventh, formed great designs of foreign conquests, though they were disappointed by his inability, by the levity of the nation, and by other causes. Lewis the twelfth and Francis the first, but especially Francis, meddled deep in the affairs of Europe: and though the superiour genius of Ferdinand called the catholick, and the star of Charles the fifth prevailed against them, yet the efforts they made show sufficiently how the strength and importance of this monarchy were increased in their time. From whence we may date likewise the rivalship of the house of France, for we may reckon that of Valois and that of Bourbon as one upon this occasion, and the house of Austria; that continues at this day, and that has cost so much blood and so much treasure in the course of it.

II. In ENGLAND.

Though the power and influence of the nobility sunk in the great change that began under Henry the seventh in England, as they did in that which began under Lewis the eleventh in France; yet the new constitutions that these changes produced were very different. In France the lords alone lost, the king alone gained; the clergy held their possessions and their immunities, and

the people remained in a state of mitigated slavery. But in England the people gained as well as the crown. The commons had already a share in the legislature; so that the power and influence of the lords being broke by Henry the seventh, and the property of the commons increasing by the sale that his son made of church-lands, the power of the latter increased of course by this change in a constitution, the forms whereof were favourable to them. The union of the roses put an end to the civil wars of York and Lancaster, that had succeeded those we commonly call the barons wars, and the humour of warring in France, that had lasted near four hundred years under the Normans and Plantagenets, for plunder as well as conquest, was spent. Our temple of Janus was shut by Henry the seventh. We neither laid waste our own nor other countries any longer: and wise laws and a wise government changed insensibly the manners, and gave a new turn to the spirit of our people. We were no longer the free-booters we had been. Our nation maintained her reputation in arms, whenever the publick interest or the publick authority required it; but war ceased to be, what it had been, our principal and almost our sole profession. The arts of peace prevailed among us. We became husbandmen, manufacturers, and merchants, and we emulated neighbouring nations in literature. It is from this time that we ought to study the history of our country, my lord, with the utmost application. We are not much concerned to know with critical accu-

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racy what were the ancient forms of our parliaments, concerning which, however, there is little room for dispute from the reign of Henry the third at least; nor in short the whole system of our civil constitution before Henry the seventh, and of our ecclesiastical constitution before Henry the eighth. But he who has not studied and acquired a thorough knowledge of them both, from these periods down to the present time, in all the variety of events by which they have been effected, will be very unfit to judge or take care of either. Just as little are we concerned to know, in any nice detail, what the conduct of our princes, relatively to our neighbours on the continent, was before this period, and at a time when the partition of power and a multitude of other circumstances rendered the whole political system of Europe so vastly different from that which has existed since. But he who has not traced this conduct from the period we fix, down to the present age, wants a principal part of the knowledge, that every English minister of state should have. Ignorance in the respects here spoken of is the less pardonable, because we have more, and more authentick, means of information concerning this, than concerning any other period. Anecdotes enow to glut the curiosity of some persons, and to silence all the captious cavils of others, will never be furnished by any portion of history; nor indeed can they according to the nature and course of human affairs: but he who is content to read and observe like a senator and

a statesman, will find in our own and in foreign historians as much information as he wants, concerning the affairs of our island, her fortune at home and her conduct abroad, from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth. I refer to foreign historians as well as to our own, for this series of our own history; not only because it is reasonable to see in what manner the historians of other countries have related the transactions wherein we have been concerned, and what judgment they have made of our conduct, domestick and foreign, but for another reason likewise. Our nation has furnished as ample and as important matter, good and bad, for history, as any nation under the sun: and yet we must yield the palm in writing history most certainly to the Italians and to the French, and I fear, even to the Germans. The only two pieces of history we have, in any respect to be compared with the ancient, are, the reign of Henry the seventh by my lord Bacon, and the history of our civil wars in the last century by your noble ancestor my lord chancellor Clarendon. But we have no general history to be compared with some of other countries: neither have we, which I lament much more, particular histories, except the two I have mentioned, nor writers of memorials, nor collectors of monuments and anecdotes, to vie in number or in merit with those that foreign nations can boast; from Commines, Guicciardin, Du Bellay, Paolo, Davila, Thuanus, and a multitude of others, down through the whole period that I propose

propose to your lordship. But although this be true, to our shame; yet it is true likewise, that we want no necessary means of information. They lie open to our industry and our discernment. Foreign writers are for the most part scarce worth reading, when they speak of our domestick affairs; nor are our Engliſh writers for the most part of greater value, when they speak of foreign affairs. In this mutual defect, the writers of other countries are, I think, more excusable than ours: for the nature of our government, the political principles in which we are bred, our distinct interests as islanders, and the complicated various interests and humours of our parties, all these are so peculiar to ourselves, and so different from the notions, manners, and habits of other nations, that it is not wonderful they should be puzzled, or should fall into errour, when they undertake to give relations of events that result from all these, or to pass any judgment upon them. But as these historians are mutually defective, so they mutually supply each other's defects. We must compare them therefore, make use of our discernment, and draw our conclusions from both. If we proceed in this manner, we have an ample fund of history in our power, from whence to collect sufficient authentick information; and we must proceed in this manner, even with our own historians of different religions, sects, and parties, or run the risque of being misled by domestick ignorance and prejudice in this case, as well as by foreign ignorance and prejudice in the other.

III. In SPAIN and the EMPIRE.

Spain figured little in Europe till the latter part of the fifteenth century; till Castile and Arragon were united by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella; till the total expulsion of the Moors, and till the discovery of the West Indies. After this, not only Spain took a new form, and grew into immense power; but, the heir of Ferdinand and Isabella being heir likewise of the houses of Burgundy and Austria, such an extent of dominion accrued to him by all these successions, and such an addition of rank and authority by his election to the empire, as no prince had been master of in Europe from the days of Charles the great. It is proper to observe here how the policy of the Germans altered in the choice of an emperor; because the effects of this alteration have been great. When Rodolphus of Hapsburg was chose in the year one thousand two hundred and seventy, or about that time, the poverty and the low estate of this prince, who had been marshal of the court to a king of Bohemia, was an inducement to elect him. The disorderly and lawless state of the empire made the princes of it in those days unwilling to have a more powerful head. But a contrary maxim took place at this æra: Charles the fifth and Francis the first, the two most powerful princes of Europe, were the sole candidates; for the elector of Saxony, who is said to have declined, was rather unable to stand in competition with them;

them: and Charles was chosen by the unanimous suffrages of the electoral college, if I mistake not. Another Charles, Charles the fourth, who was made emperor illegally enough on the deposition of Lewis of Bavaria, and about one hundred and fifty years before, seems to me to have contributed doubly to establish this maxim; by the wise constitutions that he procured to pass, that united the empire in a more orderly form and better system of government; and by alienating the imperial revenues to such a degree, that they were no longer sufficient to support an emperor, who had not great revenues of his own. The same maxim and other circumstances have concurred to keep the empire in this family ever since, as it had been often before; and this family having large dominions in the empire, and larger pretensions, as well as dominions, out of it, the other states of Europe, France, Spain and England particularly, have been more concerned since this period in the affairs of Germany, than they were before it: and by consequence the history of Germany, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, is of importance, and a necessary part of that knowledge, which your lordship desires to acquire.

The Dutch commonwealth was not formed till near a century later. But as soon as it was formed, nay even while it was forming, these provinces, that were lost to observation among the many that composed the dominions of Burgundy and Austria, became so considerable a part of the political

political system of Europe, that their history must be studied by every man, who would inform himself of this system.

Soon after this state had taken being, others of a more ancient original began to mingle in those disputes and wars, those councils, negotiations, and treaties, that are to be the principal objects of your lordship's application in the study of history. That of the northern crowns deserves your attention little, before the last century. Till the election of Frederick the first to the crown of Denmark, and till that wonderful revolution which the first Gustavus brought about in Sweden, it is nothing more than a confused rhapsody of events, in which the great kingdoms and states of Europe neither had any concern, nor took any part. From the time I have mentioned, the northern crowns have turned their counsels and their arms often southwards, and Sweden particularly, with prodigious effect.

To what purpose should I trouble your lordship with the mention of histories of other nations? They are either such as have no relation to the knowledge you would acquire, like that of the Poles, the Muscovites, or the Turks; or they are such as, having an occasional or a secondary relation to it, fall of course into your scheme; like the history of Italy for instance, which is sometimes a part of that of France, sometimes of that of Spain, and sometimes of that of Germany. The thread of history that you are to keep is that of the nations, who are and must always be concerned in the

the same scenes of action with your own. These are the principal nations of the west. Things that have no immediate relation to your own country, or to them, are either too remote, or too minute, to employ much of your time: and their history and your own is, for all your purposes, the whole history of Europe.

The two great powers, that of France and that of Austria, being formed, and a rivalship established by consequence between them; it began to be the interest of their neighbours, to oppose the strongest and most enterprising of the two, and to be the ally and friend of the weakest. From hence arose the notion of a balance of power in Europe, on the equal poize of which the safety and tranquillity of all must depend. To destroy the equality of this balance has been the aim of each of these rivals in his turn: and to hinder it from being destroyed, by preventing too much power from falling into one scale, has been the principle of all the wise councils of Europe, relatively to France and to the house of Austria through the whole period that began at the æra we have fixed, and subsists at this hour. To make a careful and just observation, therefore, of the rise and decline of these powers, in the two last centuries and in the present; of the projects which their ambition formed; of the means they employed to carry these projects on with success; of the means employed by others to defeat them; of the issue of all these endeavours in war and in negotiation; and particularly, to bring your observations home to your own country and

your

your own use, of the conduct that England held, to her honour or dishonour, to her advantage or disadvantage, in every one of the numerous and important conjunctures that happened—ought to be the principal subject of your lordship's attention in reading and reflecting on this part of modern history.

Now to this purpose you will find it of great use, my lord, when you have a general plan of the history in your mind, to go over the whole again in another method: which I propose to be this. Divide the entire period into such particular periods as the general course of affairs will mark out to you sufficiently, by the rise of new conjunctures, of different schemes of conduct, and of different theatres of action. Examine this period of history as you would examine a tragedy or a comedy; that is, take first the idea or a general notion of the whole, and after that examine every act and every scene apart. Consider them in themselves, and consider them relatively to one another. Read this history as you would that of any ancient period; but study it afterward, as it would not be worth your while to study the other; nay as you could not have in your power the means of studying the other, if the study was really worth your while. The former part of this period abounds in great historians: and the latter part is so modern, that even tradition is authentick enough to supply the want of good history, if we are curious to inquire, and if we hearken to the living with the same impartiality and freedom of judgment as we read the

the dead: and he that does one, will do the other. The whole period abounds in memorials, in collections of publick acts and monuments, of private letters, and of treaties. All these must come into your plan of study, my lord: many not to be read through, but all to be consulted and compared. They must not lead you, I think, to your inquiries, but your inquiries must lead you to them. By joining history and that which we call the materia historica together in this manner, and by drawing your information from both, your lordship will acquire not only that knowledge, which many have in some degree, of the great transactions that have passed, and the great events that have happened in Europe during this period, and of their immediate and obvious causes and consequences; but your lordship will acquire a much superiour knowledge, and such a one as very few men possess almost in any degree, a knowledge of the true political system of Europe during this time. You will see it in it's primitive principles, in the constitutions of governments, the situations of countries, their national and true interests, the characters and the religion of people, and other permanent circumstances. You will trace it through all it's fluctuations, and observe how the objects vary seldom, but the means perpetually, according to the different characters of princes, and of those who govern; the different abilities of those who serve; the course of accidents, and a multitude of other irregular and contingent circumstances.

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The particular periods into which the whole period should be divided, in my opinion, are these. 1. From the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. 2. From thence to the Pyrenean treaty. 3. From thence down to the present time.

Your lordship will find this division as apt and as proper, relatively to the particular histories of England, France, Spain, and Germany, the principal nations concerned, as it is relatively to the general history of Europe.

The death of queen Elizabeth, and the accession of king James the first, made a vast alteration in the government of our nation at home, and in her conduct abroad, about the end of the first of these periods. The wars that religion occasioned, and ambition fomented in France, through the reigns of Francis the second, Charles the ninth, Henry the third, and a part of Henry the fourth, ended: and the furies of the league were crushed by this great prince, about the same time. Philip the second of Spain marks this period likewise by his death, and by the exhausted condition in which he left the monarchy he governed: which took the lead no longer in disturbing the peace of mankind, but acted a second part in abetting the bigotry and ambition of Ferdinand the second and the third. The thirty years war that devasted Germany did not begin till the eighteenth year of the seventeenth century, but the seeds of it were sowing some time before, and even at the end of the sixteenth. Ferdinand the first and Maximilian had shown much lenity and moderation

moderation in the disputes and troubles, that arose on account of religion. Under Rodolphus and Matthias, as the succession of their cousin Ferdinand approached, the fires that were covered began to smoke and to sparkle: and if the war did not begin with this century, the preparation for it, and the expectation of it did.

The second period ends in one thousand six hundred and sixty, the year of the restoration of Charles the second to the throne of England; when our civil wars, and all the disorders which Cromwell's usurpation had produced, were over; and therefore a remarkable point of time, with respect to our country. It is no less remarkable with respect to Germany, Spain, and France.

As to Germany; the ambitious projects of the German branch of Austria had been entirely defeated, the peace of the empire had been restored, and almost a new constitution formed, or an old one revived by the treaties of Westphalia; nay the imperial eagle was not only fallen, but her wings were clipped.

As to Spain; the Spanish branch was fallen as low twelve years afterward, that is, in the year one thousand six hundred and sixty. Philip the second left his successors a ruined monarchy. He left them something worse; he left them his example and his principles of government, founded in ambition, in pride, in ignorance, in bigotry, and all the pedantry of state. I have read somewhere

where or other, that the war of the Low Countries alone cost him, by his own confession, five hundred and sixty-four millions, a prodigious sum in what species soever he reckoned. Philip the third and Philip the fourth followed his example and his principles of government, at home and abroad. At home, there was much form, but no good order, no œconomy, nor wisdom of policy in the state. The church continued to devour the state, and that monster the inquisition to dispeople the country, even more than perpetual war, and all the numerous colonies that Spain had sent to the West-Indies: for your lordship will find that Philip the third drove more than nine hundred thousand Moriscoes out of his dominions by one edict, with such circumstances of inhumanity in the execution of it, as Spaniards alone could exercise, and that tribunal, who had provoked this unhappy race to revolt, could alone approve. Abroad, the conduct of these princes was directed by the same wild spirit of ambition: rash in undertaking, though slow to execute, and obstinate in pursuing, though unable to succeed, they opened a new sluice to let out the little life and vigour that remained in their monarchy. Philip the second is said to have been piqued against his uncle Ferdinand, for refusing to yield the empire to him on the abdication of Charles the fifth. Certain it is, that as much as he loved to disturb the peace of mankind, and to meddle in every quarrel that had the appearance of supporting the Roman and oppressing every other

other church, he meddled little in the affairs of Germany. But, Ferdinand and Maximilian dead, and the offspring of Maximilian extinct, the kings of Spain espoused the interests of the other branch of their family, entertained remote views of ambition in favour of their own branch, even on that side, and made all the enterprises of Ferdinand of Gratz, both before and after his elevation to the empire, the common cause of the house of Austria. What completed their ruin was this: they knew not how to lose, nor when to yield. They acknowledged the independency of the Dutch commonwealth, and became the allies of their ancient subjects at the treaty of Munster: but they would not forego their usurped claim on Portugal, and they persisted to carry on singly the war against France. Thus they were reduced to such a lowness of power as can hardly be paralleled in any other case: and Philip the fourth was obliged at last to conclude a peace, on terms repugnant to his inclination, to that of his people, to the interest of Spain, and to that of all Europe, in the Pyrenean treaty.

As to France; this æra of the entire fall of the Spanish power is likewise that from which we may reckon that France grew as formidable, as we have seen her, to her neighbours, in power and pretensions. Henry the fourth meditated great designs, and prepared to act a great part in Europe in the very beginning of this period, when Ravaillac stabbed him. His designs died with

him, and are rather guessed at than known; for surely those which his historian Perefixe and the compilers of Sully's memorials ascribe to him, of a christian commonwealth divided into fifteen states, and of a senate to decide all differences, and to maintain this new constitution of Europe, are too chimerical to have been really his: but his general design of abasing the house of Austria, and establishing the superiour power in that of Bourbon, was taken up, about twenty years after his death, by Richelieu, and was pursued by him and by Mazarin with so much ability and success, that it was effected entirely by the treaties of Westphalia and by the Pyrenean treaty; that is, at the end of the second of those periods I have presumed to propose to your lordship.

When the third, in which we now are, will end, and what circumstances will mark the end of it, I know not: but this I know, that the great events, and revolutions, which have happened in the course of it, interest us still more nearly than those of the two precedent periods. I intended to have drawn up an elenchus or summary of the three, but I doubted, on further reflection, whether my memory would enable me to do it with exactness enough: and I saw that, if I was able to do it, the deduction would be immeasurably long. Something of this kind however it may be reasonable to attempt, in speaking of the last period: which may hereafter occasion a further trouble to your lordship.

But

But to give you some breathing-time, I will postpone it at present, and am in the mean while,

My Lord,

Yours, &c.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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